ST. ANDREWS COLLEGE LIBRARY
PS2698 .E75 1895 NSPC
Repplier / Essays in miniature
3 1960 00055 3428

FLORA MACDONA

814.45

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/essaysinminiatur0000agne_k9a9

By Agnes Repplier

COUNTER-CURRENTS.

AMERICANS AND OTHERS.

A HAPPY HALF-CENTURY AND OTHER ESSAYS.

IN OUR CONVENT DAYS

COMPROMISES.

THE FIRESIDE SPHINX With 4 full-page and 17 text Illustrations by Miss E. BONSALL.

BOOKS AND MEN.

POINTS OF VIEW

ESSAYS IN IDLENESS.

IN THE DOZY HOURS, AND OTHER PAPERS.

ESSAYS IN MINIATURE.

A BOOK OF FAMOUS VERSE. Selected by Agnes Repplier. In Riverside Library for Young People.

THE SAME. *Holiday Edition.*

VARIA.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

ESSAYS IN MINIATURE

BY

AGNES REPPLIER, LITT. D.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

515-3

Copyright, 1892,
By CHARLES L. WEBSTER & CO.

Copyright, 1895,
By AGNES REPPLIER.

All rights reserved.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Our Friends, The Books	11
Trials of a Publisher	28
The Oppression of Notes	45
Conversation in Novels	59
A Short Defence of Villains	70
A By-Way in Fiction	87
Comedy of the Custom House	104
Mr. Wilde's *Intentions*	121
Humors of Gastronomy	129
Children in Fiction	144
Three Famous Old Maids	157
The Charm of the Familiar	171
Old World Pets	182
Battle of the Babies	195
The Novel of Incident	207
Ghosts	218

ESSAYS IN MINIATURE

OUR FRIENDS, THE BOOKS

THERE is a short paragraph in Hazlitt's *Conduct of Life* that I read very often, and always with fresh delight. He is offering much good counsel to a little lad at school, and when he comes to a matter upon which most counselors are wont to be exceedingly didactic and diffuse—the choice of books—he condenses all he has to say into a few wise and gentle words that are well worth taking to heart:

"As to the works you will have to read by choice or for amusement, the best are the commonest. The names of many of them are already familiar to you. Read them as you grow up with all the satisfaction in your power, and

make much of them. It is perhaps the greatest pleasure you will have in life, the one you will think of longest, and repent of least. If my life had been more full of calamity than it has been (much more than yours, I hope, will be) I would live it over again, my poor little boy, to have read the books I did in my youth."

In all literature there is nothing truer or better than this, and its sad sincerity contrasts strangely with the general tone of the essay, which is somewhat in the manner of Lord Chesterfield. But here, at least, Hazlitt speaks with the authority of one whose books had ever been his friends; who had sat up all night as a child over *Paul and Virginia*, and to whom the mere sight of an odd volume of some good old English author, on a street stall, brought back with keen and sudden rapture the flavor of those early joys which he remembered longest, and repented least. His words ring consolingly in these different days, when we have not only ceased reading what is old, but when—a far greater misfortune—we have forgotten how

to read "with all the satisfaction in our power," and with a simple surrendering of ourselves to the pleasure which has no peer. There are so many things to be considered now besides pleasure, that we have well-nigh abandoned the effort to be pleased. In the first place, it is necessary to "keep up" with a decent proportion of current literature, and this means perpetual labor and speed, whereas idleness and leisure are requisite for the true enjoyment of books. In the second place, few of us are brave enough to withstand the pressure which friends, mentors and critics bring to bear upon us, and which effectually crushes anything like the weak indulgence of our own tastes. The reading they recommend being generally in the nature of a corrective, it is urged upon us with little regard to personal inclination; in fact, the less we like it, the greater our apparent need. There are people in this world who always insist upon others remodeling their diet on a purely hygienic basis; who entreat us to avoid sweets or acids, or tea or coffee, or whatever we chance to particularly like; who tell us per-

suasively that cress and dandelions will purify our blood; that celery is an excellent febrifuge; that shaddocks should be eaten for the sake of their quinine, and fish for its phosphorus; that stewed fruit is more wholesome than raw; that rice is more nutritious than potatoes; —who deprive us, in a word, of that hearty human happiness which should be ours when dining. Like Mr. Woodhouse, they are capable of having the sweetbreads and asparagus carried off before our longing eyes, and baked apples provided as a substitute.

It is in the same benevolent spirit that kind-hearted critics are good enough to warn us against the books we love, and to prescribe for us the books we ought to read. With robust assurance they offer to give our tutelage their own personal supervision, and their disinterested zeal carries them occasionally beyond the limits of discretion. I have been both amazed and gratified by the lack of reserve with which these unknown friends have volunteered to guide my own footsteps through the perilous paths of literature. They are so urgent, too,

not to say severe, in their manner of proffering assistance: "To Miss Repplier we would particularly recommend"—and then follows a list of books of which I dare say I stand in open need; but which I am naturally indisposed to consider with much kindness, thrust upon me, as they are, like paregoric or a porous plaster. If there be people who can take their pleasures medicinally, let them read by prescription and grow fat! But let me rather keep for my friends those dear and familiar volumes which have given me a large share of my life's happiness. If they are somewhat antiquated and out of date, I have no wish to flout their vigorous age. A book, Hazlitt reminds us, is not, like a woman, the worse for being old. If they are new, I do not scorn them for a fault which is common to all their kind. *Paradise Lost* was once new, and was regarded as a somewhat questionable novelty. If they come from afar, or are compatriots of my own, they are equally well-beloved. There can be no aliens in the ranks of literature, no national prejudice in an honest enjoyment of

art. The book, after all, and not the date or birthplace of its author, is of material importance. "It seems ungracious to refuse to be a *terræ filius*," says Mr. Arnold; "but England is not all the world." Neither, for that matter, is America, nor even Russia. The universe is a little wider and a little older than we are pleased to think, and to have lived long and traveled far does not necessarily imply inferiority. The volume that has crossed the seas, the volume that has survived its generation, stand side by side with their new-born American brother, and there is no lack of harmony in such close companionship. Books of every age and of every nation show a charming adaptability in their daily intercourse; and, if left to themselves, will set off each other's merits in the most amiable and disinterested manner, each one growing better by contact with its excellent neighbor. It is only when the patriotic critic comes along, and stirs up dissensions in their midst, that this peaceful atmosphere is rent with sudden discord; that the English book grows disdainful and super-

cilious; the American, aggressive and sarcastic; the French, malicious and unkind. It is only when we apply to them a test which is neither wise nor worthy that they show all their bad qualities, and afford a wrangling ground for the ill-natured reviewers of two continents.

There is a story told of the Russian poet, Pushkin, which I like to think true, because it is so pretty. When he was carried home fatally wounded from the duel which cost him his life, his young wife, who had been the innocent cause of the tragedy, asked him whether there were no relatives or friends whom he wished to see summoned to his bedside. The dying man lifted his heavy eyes to the shelf where stood his favorite books, and murmured faintly in reply, "Farewell, my friends." When we remember that Pushkin lived before Russian literature had become a great and dispiriting power, when we realize that he had never been ordered by critics to read Turguéneff, never commanded severely to worship Tolstoï or be an outcast in the land, never

even reveled in the dreadful gloom of Dostoïevsky, it seems incredible to the well-instructed that he should have loved his books so much. It is absolutely afflicting to think that many of these same volumes were foreign, were romantic, perhaps even cheerful in their character; that they were not his mentors, his disciplinarians, his guides to a higher and sadder life, but only his "friends." Why, Hazlitt himself could have used no simpler term of endearment. Charles Lamb might have uttered the very words when he closed his patient eyes in the dull little cottage at Edmonton. Sir Walter Scott might have murmured them on that still September morn when the clear rippling of the Tweed hushed his tired heart to rest. I think that Shelley bade some swift, unconscious farewell to all the dear delights of reading, when he thrust into his pocket the little volume of Keats, with its cover bent hastily backward, and rose, still dreamy with fairy-land, to face a sudden death. I think that Montaigne bade farewell to the fourscore "every-day books" that were his

chosen companions, before turning serenely away from the temperate pleasures of life.

For all these men loved literature, not contentiously, nor austerely, but simply as their friend. All read with that devout sincerity which precludes petulance, or display, or lettered asceticism, the most dismal self-torment in the world. In that delicious dialogue of Landor's between Montaigne and Scaliger, the scholar intimates to the philosopher that his library is somewhat scantily furnished, and that he and his father between them have written nearly as many volumes as Montaigne possesses on his shelves. "Ah!" responds the sage with gentle malice, "to write them is quite another thing; but one reads books without a spur, or even a pat from our Lady Vanity."

Could anything be more charming, or more untrue than this? Montaigne, perched tranquilly on his Guyenne hill-slope, may have escaped the goad; but we, the victims of our swifter day, know too well how remorselessly Lady Vanity pricks us round the course. Are

we not perpetually showing our paces at her command, and under the sharp incentive of her heel? Yet Charles Lamb, in the heart of London, preserved by some fine instinct the same intellectual freedom that Montaigne cherished in sleepy Gascony. He too was fain to read for pleasure, and his unswerving sincerity is no less enviable than the clearness of his literary insight. Indeed, while many of his favorite authors may have no message for our ears, yet every line in which he writes his love is pregnant with enjoyment; every word expresses subtly a delicious sense of satisfaction. The soiled and torn copies of *Tom Jones* and *The Vicar of Wakefield* from the circulating library, which speak eloquently to him of the thousand thumbs that have turned over each well-worn page; the "kind-hearted play-book" which he reaches down from some easy shelf; the old *Town and Country Magazine* which he finds in the window-seat of an inn; the "garrulous, pleasant history" of Burnet; the "beautiful, bare narrative" of *Robinson Crusoe*; the antiquated,

time-stained edition of "that fantastic old great man," Robert Burton; the Folio Beaumont and Fletcher—all these and many more are Lamb's tried friends, and he writes of them with lingering affection. He is even able, through some fine choice of words, to convey to us the precise degree and quality of pleasure which they yield him, and which he wins us to share, not by exhortations or reproaches, but gently, with alluring smiles, and hinted promises of reward. How craftily he holds each treasured volume before our eyes! How apt the brief, caressing sentence in which he sings its praises!—"The sweetest names, and which carry a perfume in the mention, are Kit Marlowe, Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, and Cowley." "Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played before you enter upon him. Who listens, had need bring docile thoughts, and purged ears." "Winter evenings—the world shut out—with less of ceremony the gentle Shakespeare enters. At such a season, the *Tempest*, or his own *Winter's Tale*."

In fact, the knowledge of when to read a book is almost as valuable as the knowledge of what book to read, and Lamb, as became a true lover of literature, realized instinctively that certain hours and certain places seem created expressly for the supreme enjoyment of an author, who yields to these harmonious surroundings his best and rarest gifts. To pick up *The Faerie Queene* as a stop-gap in the five or six impatient minutes before dinner, to carry *Candide* into the "serious avenues" of a cathedral, to try and skim over Richardson when in the society of a lively girl—Lamb knew too well that these unholy feats are the accomplishments of an intellectual acrobat, not of a modest and simple-hearted reader. Hazlitt also was keenly alive to the influences of time and place. His greatest delight in poring over the books of his youth lay in the many recollections they aroused of scenes and moments rich in vanished joys. He opened a faded, dusty volume, and behold! the spot where first he read it, the day it was received, the feeling of the air, the fields, the sky, all re-

turned to him with charming distinctness, and with them returned his first rapturous impression of that long-closed, long-neglected romance : " Twenty years are struck off the list, and I am a child again." Mr. Pater lays especial emphasis on the circumstances under which our favorite authors are read. " A book," he says, " like a person, has its fortunes with one ; is lucky or unlucky in the precise moment of its falling in our way ; and often, by some happy accident, ranks with us for something more than its independent value." Thus it is that Marius and Fabian, nestled in the ripened corn amid the cool brown shadows, receive from the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius a strange keen pleasure ; each lad taking from the story that which he is best fitted to absorb ; each lad as unmindful of the other's feelings as of the grosser elements in the tale. For without doubt a book has a separate message for every reader, and tells him, of good or evil, that which he is able to hear. Plato, indeed, complains of all books that they lack reticence or propriety toward different classes

of persons, and his protest embodies the aversion of the flexible Greek mind for the precision of written literature. A poem or an oration which, crystallized into characters, speaks to all alike, and reveals itself indiscriminately to everybody, is of less value to the ancient scholar than the poem or oration which lingers in the master's mind, and maintains a delicate reserve toward the inferior portion of the community. Plato is so far removed from the modern spirit which seeks to persuade the multitude to read Shakespeare and Milton, that he practically resents their peering with rude, but pardonable curiosity, into the stately domains of genius. We have now grown so insistently generous in these matters that our unhappy brothers, harassed beyond endurance, may well envy the plebeian Greeks their merciful limitations ; or wish, with the little girl in *Punch*, that they had lived in the time of Charles II., "for then education was very much neglected." But strive as we may, we cannot coerce great authors into universal complaisance. Plato himself, were he

so unfortunate as to be living now, would recognize and applaud their manifest reserves. Even to the elect they speak with varying voices, and it is sometimes difficult to believe that all have read alike. When *Guy Mannering* was first given to the public, who awaited it with frantic eagerness, Wordsworth thoughtfully observed that it was a novel in the style of Mrs. Radcliffe. Murray, from whom one expects more discernment, wrote to Hogg that *Meg Merrilies* was worthy of Shakespeare; "but all the rest of the novel might have been written by Scott's brother, or any other body." Blackwood, about the same time, wrote to Murray: "If Walter Scott be the author of *Guy Mannering*, he stands far higher in this line than in his former walk." One of these verdicts has been ratified by time, but who could suppose that Julia Mannering and honest Dandy Dinmont would ever have whispered such different messages into listening ears!

And it is precisely because of the independence assumed by books, that we have need to cherish our own independence in return. They

will not all be our friends, and not one of them will give itself freely to us at the dictation of a peremptory critic. Hazlitt says nobly of a few great writers, notably Milton and Burke, that "to have lived in the cultivation of an intimacy with such works, and to have familiarly relished such names, is not to have lived in vain." This is true, yet if we must seek for companionship in less august circles, there are many milder lights who shine with a steady radiance. It is not the privilege of every one to love so great a prose writer as Burke, so great a poet as Milton. "An appreciation of *Paradise Lost*," says Mr. Mark Pattison, "is the reward of exquisite scholarship;" and the number of exquisite scholars is never very large. To march up to an author as to the cannon's mouth is at best but unprofitable heroism. To take our pleasures dutifully is the least likely way to enjoy them. The laws of Crete, it is said, were set to music, and sung as alluringly as possible after dinner; but I doubt if they afforded a really popular pastime. The well-fed guests who listened to such dec-

orous chants applauded them probably from the standpoint of citizenship, rather than from any undisguised sentiment of enjoyment, and a few degenerate souls must have sighed occasionally over the joys of a rousing and unseemly chorus. We of to-day are so rich in laws, so amply disciplined at every turn, that we have no need to be reminded at dinner of our obligations. A kind-hearted English critic once said that reading was not a duty, and had therefore no business to be made disagreeable; and that no man was under any obligation to read what another man wrote. This is an old-fashioned point of view, which has lost favor of late years, but which is not without compensations of its own. If the office of literature be to make glad our lives, how shall we seek the joy in store for us save by following Hazlitt's simple suggestion, and reading "with all the satisfaction in our power"? And how shall we insure this satisfaction, save by ignoring the restrictions imposed upon us, and cultivating, as far as we can, a sincere and pleasurable intercourse with our friends, the books?

TRIALS OF A PUBLISHER

IN reading the recently published *Memoirs and Correspondence of John Murray*, a very interesting and valuable piece of biography — albeit somewhat lengthy for these hurried days—we are forcibly impressed with one surprising truth which we were far from suspecting in our ignorance—namely, that the publisher's life, like the policeman's, is not a happy one, but filled to the brim with vexations peculiarly his own. It was as much the fashion in Murray's time as it is in ours to bewail the hard fate of down-trodden authors, and to hint that he who prints the book absorbs the praise and profit which belong in justice to him who writes it. In fact, that trenchant and time-honored jest, "Now Barabbas was a publisher," dates from this halcyon period when *Marmion* was sold for a thousand guineas, and the third canto of *Childe Harold*

for nearly twice that sum. Murray himself possessed such influence in the literary world that the battle with the public was thought to be half won when a book appeared armed with the sanction of his name. He was a man of wealth, too, of social standing, of severe and fastidious tastes; exactly fitted by circumstances, if not by nature, to play the autocratic *rôle* popularly assigned to all his craft, to crush the aspiring poet in the dust, to freeze the budding genius who sought assistance at his hands, to override with haughty arrogance the wan and needy scholar who waited at his door. Instead of this, we see him enduring with lamblike gentleness an amount of provocation which would have hallowed a mediæval saint, and which seems to our undisciplined spirits as wantonly exasperating and malign.

In the first place, his Scotch allies, Constable and the ever-sanguine James Ballantyne, appeared to have looked upon the English firm as an inexhaustible mine of wealth, from which they could, when convenient, draw whatever they required. Ballantyne,

especially, required so much, and required that much so often, that Murray was obliged to sever a connection too costly for his purse. Then his partial ownership of *Blackwood's Magazine* was for years a thorn in his flesh, and there is something truly pathetic in his miserable attempts to modify the personalities of that utterly irrepressible journal. "In the name of God," he writes vehemently to William Blackwood, "why do you seem to think it necessary that each number must give pain to some one?" Even the *Quarterly*, his own literary offspring, and the pride and glory of his heart, was at times but a fractious child, and cost him, after the fashion of children, many sleepless nights. Gifford, the editor, was incurably unbusinesslike in his habits, and never could understand why subscribers should complain and raise a row because the magazine chanced to be a month or six weeks late. It was sure to appear some time, and they had all the pleasure of anticipation. It was a point of honor with him, also, to conceal the names of his contributors, so that

when offence was given to anybody—which was pretty nearly always—the aggrieved person immediately attacked Murray in return. There are hosts of letters in these volumes from indignant authors who express themselves with true British candor because the *Quarterly* has assailed their books, or their friends' books, or their friends' friends' books, or their pet politicians, or their most cherished political schemes. There are hosts of other letters which merely record a distinctly unfavorable opinion of the magazine's literary qualities, and which lament with pitiless sincerity that the last number hardly contained a single readable article.

All these annoyances, however, prickly though they appear, are but trifles in comparison with the extraordinary demands made upon Murray as a publisher. Impecunious playwrights, like poor Charles Maturin, pelt him with unsalable dramas and heartrending appeals for help. Impecunious essayists, like Charles Marsh, send papers to the *Quarterly*, and — before they are read — request fifteen

pounds, "as money on manuscript deposited." Impecunious patriots, like Foscolo — that bright particular star of sentimental Liberals —demand loans of a thousand pounds, to be repaid with literary work. Impecunious poets, like James Hogg, borrow fifty pounds with the lofty patronage of sovereigns. It is very amusing to note the tone assumed by the Ettrick Shepherd in his intercourse with a man of Murray's influence and position. When he is in a good humor, that is, when he has negotiated a successful loan, he writes in this generous fashion: "Though I have heard some bitter things against you, I never met with any man whatever who, on so slight an acquaintance, has behaved to me so much like a gentleman." Or again, "You may be misled, and you may be mistaken, my dear Murray, but as long as you tell me the simple truth as plainly, you and I will be friends." If things go haltingly, however, and there is a delay in forwarding cheques, this magnificent condescension sharpens into angry protest. "What the deuce," he writes vehemently, "have you made of my

excellent poem,* that you are never publishing it, while I am starving for money, and cannot even afford a Christmas goose to my friends?" When a new edition of *The Queen's Wake* was printed in Edinburgh, a very handsome quarto selling for a guinea—which seems a heart-breaking price—Murray with his usual generosity subscribed for twenty-five copies; whereupon we find Hogg promptly acknowledging this munificence by begging him to persuade others to do likewise. "You must make a long pull and a strong pull in London for subscriptions," he writes, with enviable composure, "as you and Mr. Rogers are the principal men I have to rely on." There is something very tranquillizing in the gentle art of shifting one's burdens to other shoulders. Genius flourishes like the mountain oak when it can strike root in the money-boxes of less gifted friends.

If tact and patience were both required in soothing Hogg's petulant vanity and in providing for his extravagant habits, the task be-

* "The Pilgrims of the Sun."

came harder and more thankless when Leigh Hunt presented himself in the field. I can imagine few things more delightful than to have had money transactions with a person of Leigh Hunt's peculiar and highly original methods. He was a kind of literary Oliver, crying perpetually for more. When the *Story of Rimini* was still uncompleted, it was offered by the poet to Murray with this diverting assurance :

"Booksellers tell me I ought not to ask less than four hundred and fifty pounds (which is a sum I happen to want just now), and my friends, not in the trade, say I ought not to ask less than five hundred, with such a trifling acknowledgment upon the various editions, after the second and third, as shall enable me to say that I am still profiting by it."

Murray, evidently disconcerted by the coolness of this proposal, writes back with veiled and courteous sarcasm, suggesting that the manuscript be offered upon these terms to other publishers. Should they refuse to accept it, he is willing to print a small edition at

his own expense, and divide the profits with the author, to whom the copyright shall be restored. Rather to our amazement, and perhaps to Murray's, Leigh Hunt closes immediately with this very moderate offer; and as soon as the book appears he writes again, begging to have part of the money advanced to him. Murray's reply is eminently characteristic of the man. The poem, he says, is selling well. Should the entire edition be exhausted, which he doubts not will be the case, the poet's share of the profits would amount to exactly forty-eight pounds and ten shillings. He takes pleasure in enclosing a cheque for fifty pounds, and only asks that a receipt may be sent him for the same. The receipt is not sent until ten days are past, when it arrives accompanied by a long letter in which Leigh Hunt enlarges upon his pecuniary troubles—concerning these he is as explicit as Micawber—and proposes that Murray should now purchase the copyright of *Rimini* for four hundred and fifty pounds, and let him have the money at once. Unhappily, the answer to this admi-

rable piece of negotiation has been lost, but it was evidently too patronizing to please the poet, who was as sensitive as he was insatiable. The next letter we have from him sharply reminds Murray that he is not seeking for assistance, but merely endeavoring to transact a piece of business which would involve no possible risk for any one. Finally the poor harassed publisher persuades him with soft words to sell the copyright of *Rimini* to another firm, and there must have been a deep breath of relief drawn in Albemarle Street when the matter was at last adjusted, and the troublesome correspondence ceased. In fact, there is a letter from Blackwood frankly congratulating Murray on his escape. "I dare say you are well rid of Leigh Hunt," writes this experienced ally to his fellow-sufferer; "and I really pity you when I think of the difficulty you must often have in managing with authors, and particularly with the friends of authors whom you wish to oblige."

One of those whom Murray wished eagerly to oblige, until he found the task too costly for

his purse, was Madame de Staël. For the English and French editions of her work on Germany he paid no less than fifteen hundred pounds, and speedily found himself a loser by the transaction. Gifford, who had scant liking for the celebrated "hurricane in petticoats," writes to him on the occasion with gentle malice, and a too evident amusement at his discomfiture: "I can venture to assure you that the hope of keeping her from the press is quite vain. The family of Œdipus were not more haunted and goaded by the Furies than the Neckers, father, mother, and daughter, have always been by the demon of publication. Madame de Staël will therefore write and print without intermission." Not without being well paid, however; for three years later we find the Baron de Staël writing to Murray in his mother's name, and demanding four thousand pounds for her three-volume work, *Des Causes et des Effets de la Révolution Française.* "My mother *insists* upon four thousand pounds, besides a credit in books for every new edition," says this imperative gentleman, some-

what in the manner of a footpad; to whom Murray responds with much tranquillity, thanking him for his "obliging letter," and intimating that he and Longman together are willing to pay one thousand pounds for the first French and English editions, and three hundred and fifty pounds for the second. Madame de Staël indignantly repudiates this offer, declaring that twenty-five hundred pounds is the least she can think of taking, and that the book will be a bargain at such a price. Murray, who knows something about bargains, and who has been rendered more cautious than usual by his experience with *L'Allemagne*, declines such palpable risks, and excuses himself from further negotiations. *La Révolution Française* did not appear until after Madame de Staël's death, when it was published by Messrs. Baldwin and Cradock, and proved a lamentable failure, people having begun by that time to grow a trifle weary of such a thrice-told tale.

The most amusing and at the same time most pathetic bit of correspondence in these two

big volumes relates to a translation of *Faust*, which Coleridge, so eminently qualified for the task, offers to write for Murray. He unfolds his views in a letter as long as an average essay—or what we call an essay in these degenerate days—evincing on every page a superb contempt for the reading public, which was expected to buy the book, a painful reluctance to "attempt anything of a literary nature with any motive of pecuniary advantage"—which does not prevent him from doing some elaborate bargaining later on—and a tendency to plunge into intellectual abstractions, calculated to chill the heart of the stoutest publisher in Christendom. There is one incomparable paragraph which Coleridge alone could have written, and a portion of which—only a portion—I cannot refrain from quoting:

"Any work in Poetry strikes me with more than common awe, as proposed for realization by myself, because from long habits of meditation on language, as the symbolic medium of the connection of Thought with Thought as affected and modified by Passion and Emotion,

I should spend days in avoiding what I deemed faults, though with the full foreknowledge that their admission would not have offended three of all my readers, and might perhaps be deemed beauties by three hundred—if so many there were; and this not out of any respect for the public (*i.e.*, the persons who might happen to purchase and look over the book) but from a hobby-horsical, superstitious regard to my own feelings and sense of Duty. Language is the sacred Fire in this Temple of Humanity, and the Muses are its especial and vestal priestesses. Though I cannot prevent the vile drugs and counterfeit Frankincense which render its flames at once pitchy, glowing, and unsteady, I would yet be no voluntary accomplice in the Sacrilege. With the commencement of a Public, commences the degradation of the Good and the Beautiful—both fade and retire before the accidentally Agreeable. *Othello* becomes a hollow lip-worship; and the *Castle Spectre*, or any more peccant thing of Froth, Noise, and Impermanence, that may have overbillowed it on the restless sea of curiosity, is

the true Prayer of the Praise and Admiration."

Fancy the feelings of a poor publisher assailed with this raging torrent of words! Murray, stemming the tide as best he can, replies in a short, businesslike note, proposing terms —not very liberal ones—for the desired translation. Whereupon Coleridge writes a second letter, actually longer than the first, intimating that a hundred pounds is but scant remuneration for such a piece of work, "executed as alone I can or dare do it—that is, to the utmost of my power; for which the intolerable Pain, nay the far greater Toil and Effort of doing otherwise, is a far safer Pledge than any solicitude on my part concerning the approbation of the Public."

Finally, the undertaking was abandoned, and the English-speaking world lost its single chance of having *Faust* adequately translated; lost it, I truly believe, through the reluctance of even a patient man to stomach any further correspondence.

Trials of a very different order poured in on

Murray through his connection with Lord Byron, an honor which was not altogether without thorns. People who thought Byron's poetry immoral wrote frankly to Murray to say so. People who did not think Byron's poetry immoral wrote quite as frankly to complain of those who did. His noble lordship himself was at times both petulant and exacting, and there is a ring of true dignity in the following remonstrance offered by the publisher to the peer, by "Mr. Bookseller Murray," as Napier contemptuously calls him, to the poet whose good qualities he was so quick to understand:

"I assure you," he writes, "that I take no umbrage at irritability which will occasionally burst from a mind like yours; but I sometimes feel a deep regret that in our pretty long intercourse I appear to have failed to show that a man in my situation may possess the feelings and principles of a gentleman. Most certainly do I think that, from personal attachment, I could venture as much in any shape for your service as any of those who have the good fortune to be ranked amongst your friends."

In fact, the friends of authors were too often, as Blackwood hinted, the sources of Murray's severest trials. Friends are obliging creatures in their way, and always ready to give with lavish hearts their wealth of criticism and opinion. There is a delightful letter from the Rev. H. H. Milman, Dean of St. Paul's, offering to Murray his sadly unreadable poem *Belshazzar*, with this timely intimation: "I give you fair warning that all the friends who have hitherto seen it assure me that I shall not do myself justice unless I demand a very high price for it." Murray, in reply, hints as urbanely as he can that, as it is he and not Mr. Milman's friends who is to pay the price, he cannot accept their judgment in the matter as final; he is compelled to take into consideration his own chances of profit. Throughout all his correspondence we note this tone of careful self-repression, of patient and courteous kindness. Now and then only, particularly trying letters appear to have been left unanswered, as though the limits of even his endurance had been reached. When we remember

that the *Quarterly* was the cherished idol of his life, and that his pride and delight in it knew no bounds, we can dimly appreciate his feelings on receiving the following lines from Southey, whose principal income for years had been derived from the magazine's most liberal and open-handed payments. "It is a great price," writes the author of *Thalaba*, who has just pocketed a comfortable sum, "and it is very convenient for me to receive it. But I will tell you, with that frankness which you have always found in my correspondence and conversation, that I must suspect my time might be more profitably employed (as I am sure it might be more worthily) than in writing for your journal, even at that price."

I am not wont to peer too closely into the secrets of the human heart, but I would like to know exactly how Murray felt when he read that letter. "Let me at least be eaten by a lion!" says Epictetus. "Let me at least be insulted by a genius!" might well have been the publisher's lament.

THE OPPRESSION OF NOTES

THAT innocent nondescript, the average reader, is suffering very sorely at the present day from what might be justly called the oppression or tyranny of notes. I hear, indeed, from time to time, bitter complaints of editorial inaccuracy, of the unscholarly treatment of quite forgotten masterpieces by the industrious gentlemen who seek to reintroduce them to the public; but such inaccuracy can wound only the limited number who know more than the editor, and who in their secret souls are not sorry to prove him wrong. The average reader, even though he hold himself to be of moderate intelligence, is happily ignorant of such fine shadings, and only asks that he may enjoy his books in a moderately intelligent manner; that he may be helped over hedges and ditches, and allowed to ramble unmolested where the ground seems toler-

ably smooth. This is precisely the privilege, however, which a too liberal editor is disinclined to allow. He will build you a bridge over a raindrop, put ladders up a pebble, and encompass you on every side with ingenious alpenstocks and climbing-irons; yet when, perchance, you stumble and hold out a hand for help, behold, he is never there to grasp it. He merely refers you, with some coldness, to a remote authority who will give you the assistance you require when you have reached the end of your journey. Mr. Ritchie, for example, who has recently edited a volume of Mrs. Carlyle's early letters, expects you patiently to search for the information you want in Mr. Froude's pages, which is always a disheartening thing to be asked to do. Yet when Jeanie Welsh, writing cheerfully of an inconstant lover, says, "*Mais n'importe!* It is only one more Spanish castle demolished; another may start up like a mushroom in its place;" an explanatory note carefully reveals to you that "Spanish castle" really means "château en Espagne"—a circumstance which even Mac-

aulay's schoolboy would probably have deciphered for himself.

If it be hard on the average reader to be referred chillingly to modern writers who are at least within approachable distance, it is harder still to be requested to look up classical authorities. If it be hard to be told occasionally by that prince of good editors, Mr. Alfred Ainger, to please turn elsewhere for the little bits of information which we think he might give us about Charles Lamb, it is harder still to have Mr. Wright refuse to translate for us Edward Fitzgerald's infrequent lapses into Greek. What is the use of saying in a note "v. 9" when Fitzgerald quotes Herodotus? If I can read the quotation for myself, I have no need to hunt up v. 9; and if I can't, v. 9 is of no use to me when found. Even "Hor. Od. I. 4, 14, 15," is not altogether satisfactory to the indifferent scholar, for whom Fitzgerald himself had such generous sympathy, and for whom his translations were avowedly undertaken.

These are merely cases, however, in which

notes refuse to be helpful; they are apt to become absolutely oppressive when accompanying older writers. A few years ago I bought a little English edition of the *Religio Medici*, to which are added the *Letter to a Friend* and *Christian Morals*. The book is one of Macmillan's Golden Treasury Series, and is edited by Mr. W. A. Greenhill, who opens with an "Editor's Preface," eighteen pages long, and fairly bristling with knowledge points. After this come a "Chronological Table of Dates, Connected with Sir Thomas Browne," two pages long; "Note on the Discovery of the Remains of Sir Thomas Browne in 1840," two pages; "Brief Notices of Former Editors of the *Religio Medici*," four pages; "List of Editions of *Religio Medici*," thirteen pages; "Collations of Some Old Editions of *Religio Medici*," three pages; "List of Editions of *Letter to a Friend* and *Christian Morals*," five pages; "*Addenda et Corrigenda*," one page. Having thus laboriously cleared the way, we are at last gladdened by a sight of the *Religio Medici* itself, which, together with the *Letter* and *Christian Morals*, occupies

two hundred and thirty pages. Then, following close, like the mighty luggage of a Persian army, come an array of "Notes Critical and Explanatory," eighty-eight pages; and an Index just sixty-nine pages long. Thus it will be seen that two hundred and five pages of editorial work are deemed necessary to elucidate two hundred and thirty pages of Sir Thomas Browne, which seems like an intolerable deal of sack for such a quantity of bread. To compress all this into a small volume requires close printing and flimsy paper, and the ungrateful reader thinks in his hardened heart that he would rather a little more space had been given to the author, and a little less to the editor, who is for most of us, after all, a secondary consideration. It is also manifestly impossible, with such a number of notes, even to refer to them at the bottom of the page; yet without this guiding finger they are often practically useless. We are not as a rule aware, when we read, what information we lack, and it becomes a grievous duty to examine every few minutes and see if we ought not to be finding something out.

A glance at the notes themselves is very discouraging:

"P. 10, l. 14, directed, A to E, G; direct, F, H to L.

"P. 10, l. 16, rectified, A to I; rectifie, J, K, L.

"P. 10, l. 28, consist, A to J; resist, K, L."

Reading with such helps as these becomes a literary nightmare:

"P. 8, l. 8, distinguished] Chapman (R) and Gardiner (W) read 'being distinguished.'

"P. 8, l. 8, distinguished not only] Wilkin (T) read 'not only distinguished.'"

And this is weirder still:

"P. 59, l. 4, antimetathesis, C to M; antanaclasis, A, B; transposition of words, N, O."

It may easily be surmised that eighty-eight pages of such concentrated and deadly erudition weigh very heavily on the unscholarly soul. We are reminded forcibly of the impatience manifested by Mr. E. S. Dallas, in *The Gay Science*, over Porson's notes on Euripides, from which he had hoped so much and gleaned so little; which were all about words and less

than words—syllables, letters, accents, punctuation.

"Codex A and Codex B, Codex Cantabrigiensis and Codex Cottonianus, were ransacked in turn to show how this noun should be in the dative, not in the accusative; how that verb should have the accent paroxytone, not perispomenon; and how, by all the rules of prosody, there should be an iambus, not a spondee, in this place or that." The lad who has heard all his college life about the wonderful supplement to the *Hecuba* turns to it with wistful eyes, expecting to find some subtle key to Greek tragedy. "Behold, it is a treatise on certain Greek metres. Its talk is of cæsural pauses, penthemimeral and hephthemimeral, of isochronous feet, of enclitics and cretic terminations; and the grand doctrine it promulgates is expressed in the canon regarding the pause which, from the discoverer, has been named the Porsonian—that when the iambic trimeter after a word of more than one syllable has the cretic termination included either in one word or in two, then the fifth foot must be

an iambus. The young student throws down the book thus prefaced and supplemented, and wonders if this be all that giants of Porsonian height can see or care to speak about in Greek literature."

But then be it remembered that Euripides, as edited by Porson, was intended for the use of scholars, and there exists an impression—perhaps erroneous—that this is the sort of food for which scholars hunger and thirst. Sir Thomas Browne has, happily, not yet passed out of the hands of the general reader, whose appetite for intellectual abstraction and the rigors of precision is distinctly moderate, and in whose behalf I urge my plea to-day.

After the oppressively erudite notes come those which interpret trifles with painstaking fidelity, and which reveal to us the meaning of quite familiar words. In Ferrier's admirable edition of the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, for example, we are told with naïve gravity that "wiselike" means "judicious," that "glowering" means "staring," that "parritch" is "porridge," that "guffaw" is a "loud laugh," that "douce" is

"sedate," that "gane" is "gone," and that "in a jiffy" means "immediately." But surely the readers of Christopher North do not require information like this. "Douce" and "parritch" and "guffaw" are not difficult words to understand, and "in a jiffy" would seem to come within the intellectual grasp of many who have not yet made the acquaintance of the alphabet.

It may be, however, that there are people who really like to be instructed in this manner, just as there are people who like to go to lectures and to organ recitals. It may even be that a taste for notes, like a taste for gin, or opium, or Dr. Ibsen's dramas, increases with what it feeds on. In that tiny volume of *Selected Poems* by Gray which Mr. Gosse has edited for the Clarendon Press, there are forty-two pages of notes to sixty pages of poetry; and while some of them are valuable and interesting, many more seem strangely superfluous. But Mr. Gosse, who has his finger on the literary pulse of his generation, is probably the last man in England to furnish information unless

it is desired. He knows, better than most purveyors of knowledge, what it is that readers want; he is not prone to waste his precious minutes; he has a saving sense of humor; and he does not aspire to be a lettered philanthropist fretting to enlighten mankind. If, then, he finds it necessary to elucidate that happy trifle, *On the Death of a Favorite Cat*, with no less than seven notes, which is at the rate of one for every verse, it must be that he is filling an expressed demand; it must be that he is aware that modern students of Gray—every one who reads a poet is a "student" nowadays—like to be told by an editor about Tyrian purple, and about Arion's dolphin, and about the difference between a tortoise-shell and a tabby. As for the seven pages of notes that accompany the *Elegy*, they carry me back in spirit to the friend of my childhood, Miss Edgeworth's Rosamond, who was expected to understand every word of every poem she studied. What a blessing Mr. Gosse's notes would have been to that poor, dear, misguided little girl, who rashly committed the *Elegy* to memory because, in hon-

est, childish fashion, she loved its pretty sound! Who can forget the pathetic scene where she attempts to recite it, and has only finished the first line,

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,"

when Godfrey, whom I always thought, and still think, a very disagreeable boy, interrupts her ruthlessly.

"'What is meant by the "curfew"? What is meant by "tolls"? What is a "knell"? What is meant by "parting day"?'

"'Godfrey, I cannot tell the meaning of every word, but I know the general meaning. It means that the day is going, that it is evening, that it is growing dark. Now let me go on.'

"'Go on,' said Godfrey, 'and let us see what you will do when you come to "the boast of heraldry," to "the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault," to the "village Hampden," to "some mute inglorious Milton," and to "some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood," you who have not come to Cromwell yet, in the history of England.'"

No wonder poor Rosamond is disheartened and silenced by such an array of difficulties in her path. It is comforting to know that Godfrey himself comes to grief, a little later, with *The Bard*, and that even the wise and irreproachable Laura confesses to have been baffled by the lines,

> "If aught of oaten stop or pastoral song
> May hope, chaste eve, to soothe thy modest ear."

"Oaten stop" was a mystery, and "eve" she thought—and was none the worse for thinking it—meant our first great erring mother.

No such wholesome blunders—pleasant to recall in later, weary, well-instructed days—would be possible for Miss Edgeworth's little people if they lived in our age of pitiless enlightenment, when even a book framed for their especial joy, like *The Children's Treasury of English Song*, bristles with marginal notes. Here Rosamond would have found an explanation of no less than forty-eight words in the *Elegy*, and would probably have understood it a great deal better, and loved it a great deal

less. It is healthy and natural for a child to be forcibly attracted by what she does not wholly comprehend; the music of words appeals very sweetly to childish ears, and their meaning comes later—comes often after the first keen unconscious pleasure is past. I once knew a tiny boy who so delighted in Byron's description of the dying gladiator that he made me read it to him over, and over, and over again. He did not know—and I never told him—what a gladiator was. He did not know that it was a statue, and not a real man, described. He had not the faintest notion of what was meant by the Danube, or the "Dacian mother," or "a Roman holiday." Historically and geographically, the boy's mind was a happy blank. There was nothing intelligent or sagacious in his enjoyment; only a blissful stirring of the heartstrings by reason of strong words, and swinging verse, and his own tangle of groping thoughts. But what child who reads Cowper's pretty remonstrance to his spaniel, and the spaniel's neat reply, wants to be told in a succession of dismal notes that "allures" means

"tempts," that "remedy" means "cure," that "killing time" means "wasting time," that "destined" means "meant for," and that "behest" means "command"? Cowper is one of the simplest of writers, and the little boys and girls who cannot be trusted unarmed in his company had better confine their reading to *Robinson Crusoe in Words of One Syllable*, or to the veracious pages of *Mother Goose*. But perhaps the day is not far distant when even *Mother Goose* will afford food for instruction and a fresh industry for authors, and when the hapless children of the dawning century will be confronted with a dozen highly abbreviated and unintelligible notes referring them to some Icelandic Saga or remote Indian epic for the bloody history of the *Three Blind Mice*.

CONVERSATION IN NOVELS

A GREAT many years ago, when I was a little girl, I used to know a dear, placid, sunny-tempered old lady who was stone-deaf and an insatiable novel-reader. She always came to our house bearing a black bag which held her jointed ear-trumpet, and she always left it with a borrowed novel under her arm. As she had reached that comfortable period of life when a book is as easily forgotten as read, our slender library supplied all her demands, on the same principle of timely reappearance which makes an imposing stage army out of two dozen elusive supernumeraries. She had a theory of selection all her own, and to which she implicitly trusted. She glanced over a story very rapidly, and if it had too many solid, page-long paragraphs—reflections, descriptions, etc.—she put it sadly but steadfastly aside. If, on the contrary, it was well broken

up into conversations, which always impart an air of sprightliness to a book, she said she was sure she would like it, and carried it off in triumph.

Those were not days, be it remembered, when people wrote fiction for the sake of introducing discussions. There still lingered in the novelist's mind the time-worn heresy that he had a story to tell, and that his people must act as well as talk. The plot—delightful and obsolete word !—was then in good repute, and conversation was mainly useful in helping on the tale, in providing copious love scenes, and, with really good novelists, in illustrating and developing character. Thomas Love Peacock's inimitable dialogues had indeed been long given to the world; but quiet people of restricted cultivation knew nothing of them, and would have found it difficult to realize their loss. I can hardly fancy our dear old friend reading and enjoying the delicious war of words in *Crotchet Castle*, and I should be grieved to think of her suddenly confronted with those scraps of sententious wisdom, in which its au-

thor took a truly impish and reprehensible delight. Such a sentiment as "Men have been found very easily permutable into ites and onians, avians and arians," might have sorely puzzled her benign and tranquil soul.

Yet no one can accuse Peacock of writing his novels in order to express his own personal convictions. The fact is that, after reading them, we are often very much in the dark as to what his convictions were. We know he loved old things better than new ones, and wine better than water; and that is about as far as we can follow him with security. "The intimate friends of Mr. Peacock may have understood his political sentiments," says Lord Houghton disconsolately, "but it is extremely difficult to discover them from his work." His people simply talk in character, sometimes tiresomely, sometimes with unapproachable keenness and humor, and the scope of his stories hardly permits any near approach to the fine gradations, the endless variety, of life. Mr. Chainmail never opens his lips save in praise of feudalism. Mr. Mac Quedy discusses

political economy only. Even the witty Dr. Folliott, "a fellow of infinite jest," seldom gets beyond the dual delights of Greek and dining. It is all vastly piquant and entertaining, but it is leagues away from the casual conversation, the little leisurely, veracious gossip in which Jane Austen reveals to us with merciless distinctness the secret springs that move a human heart. She has scant need to describe her characters, and she seldom takes that trouble. They betray themselves at every word, and stand convicted on their own evidence. We are not warned in advance against Isabella Thorpe. We meet her precisely as Catherine meets her in the Pump-room at Bath, where the young lady speedily opens her lips, and acquaints us in the most vivacious manner with her own callous folly and selfishness. Every syllable uttered by Mrs. Norris is a new and luminous revelation; we know her just that much better than we did before she spoke. Even *Sense and Sensibility*, by no means the best of Miss Austen's novels, starts with that admirable discussion between Mr. John Dash-

wood and his wife on the subject of his mother's and sisters' maintenance. It is a short chapter, the second in the book, and at its close we are masters of the whole situation. We have sounded the feeble egotism of Mr. Dashwood, and the adroit meanness of his spouse. We know precisely what degree of assistance Elinor and Marianne are likely to receive from them. We foresee the relation these characters will bear to each other during the progress of the story, and we have been shown with delicious humor how easy and pleasant is the task of self-deception. That a girl of nineteen should have been capable of such keenly artistic work is simply one of the miracles of literature; and the more we think about it, the more miraculous it grows. The best we can do is to bow our heads, and pay unqualified homage at its shrine.

Some portion of Jane Austen's ability for portraying character in conversation is discernible in at least one of her too numerous successors in the craft. The authoress of *Mademoiselle Ixe* and of *Cecilia de Noël* has already

proven to the world how deft and skilful is her manipulation of that difficult medium, drawing-room gossip. It would be unjust and absurd to compare her stories, slight and unsubstantial as pencil sketches, with the finished masterpieces of English fiction; but there are touches in these modern tales which convince even a casual reader of splendid possibilities ahead. The setting of *Mademoiselle Ixe* is so fine, the lightly drawn English people who surround the mysterious governess and her still more mysterious victim are so real, that we cease to ask ourselves obtrusive questions concerning the purpose and utility of the crime. Better still are some of the scenes in *Cecilia de Noël*, where Lady Atherley's serene and imperturbable good sense tempers the atmosphere, and gives exactly the proper effect to her husband's rather long-winded eloquence, to Mrs. Mostyn's amiable and cruel evangelism, and to Mrs. Molyneux's amusing eccentricities. All these characters have individuality of their own, and all reveal themselves through the intricacies of conversation, while occasionally

there is a felicitous touch worthy of Jane Austen's hand; as when Lady Atherley listens tranquilly to Mrs. Mostyn's tirade against the ritualistic curate, and evolves from it the one judicious conclusion that he is evidently an Austyn of Temple Leigh, and that it would be desirable to ask him to dinner.

The real drawback to Lanoe Falconer's art is, not the brevity of her work, but the fact that her people cannot develop on purely natural lines, because they are hampered by the terrible necessity of illustrating a moral; and even in their most unguarded moments the task assigned them is never wholly laid aside. It is seldom that a good tract is a good story too, and all the novelist's skill is powerless to impart a vivid semblance of truth to characters who have to "talk up" to a given subject, and teach a given lesson. The inartistic treatment of material results, curiously enough, in weakening our sense of reality; yet if the authoress of *Cecilia de Noël* would consent, for a few short years, to abandon social and spiritual problems, to concern herself as little with Ni-

hilism as with eternal punishment, but to be content, as Jane Austen was content, with telling a story, perhaps that story might be no unworthy successor of those matchless tales which are our refuge and solace in these dark days of ethical and unorthodox fiction.

There is a great deal of charming conversation, which is not as well known as it should be, in the best novels of Anthony Trollope. He gives his characters plenty of time and opportunity to talk, without forcing them into arbitrary channels; and occasionally, as with Mrs. Proudie and Archdeacon Grantly, and Lady Glencora, he persuades them to let us know exactly what kind of people they are. Above all, there is such an air of veracity about his causeries that the most skeptical reader listens to them without a shadow of doubt. Who can ever forget Bertie Stanhope intimating to Bishop Proudie that he had once thought of being a prelate himself, or Lady Glencora's midnight confidences to Alice, or that crucial contest between Dr. Tempest and Mrs. Proudie! What pleasant wrangling goes on in Mrs.

Dobbs Broughton's room over the memorable picture of Jael, when Dalrymple desires his model to lean forward, throwing her weight on the nail, and Miss Van Siever not unnaturally suggests that such an action would probably have awakened Sisera before the murder was done! It all seems idle enough—this careless, lively talk—but is by no means purposeless. Life is built up of such moments, and if we are to live with the people in books, it must be through little confidences on their parts and sympathy on ours; it must be through unconscious confidences on their parts and unrestricted sympathy on ours.

Now, if a novelist permits his characters to talk at us, the charm of unconsciousness is gone. If we feel for a moment they are uttering his sentiments for our approval or conversion, we cease to sympathize because we cease to believe. There is a clever and suspiciously opportune conversation in *David Grieve* between that sorely tried hero and an intelligent workingwoman in the Champs Elysées upon the relative merits of l'Union Légale and l'Union

Libre. It is, of course, a highly dispassionate discussion, intended as an appeal to reason and not to conscience; therefore the old-fashioned arguments of right and wrong, God and the Church, are carefully omitted. It fits in neatly with David's experiences, and places the whole matter in a singularly lucid light before the reader's eyes. Its one serious drawback is that we can never persuade ourselves to believe that it ever took place. The Frenchwoman is brought so suddenly up to the mark; she says so plainly that which Mrs. Humphry Ward thinks she ought to say; she is so charmingly unprejudiced and convincing, that we lose all faith in her before she has spoken a dozen words. The correctness of her views counts for nothing. "When we leave out what we don't like, we can demonstrate most things," says the late Rector of Lincoln; and it is at least doubtful whether men and women ever live virtuous lives on the strength of an argument. Lady Bertram, of *Mansfield Park*, remarking placidly from her sofa, "Do not act anything improper, my dears; Sir Thomas

would not like it," may not exert a powerful influence for good; but who has any shadow of doubt that those are her very words? They are spoken—as they should be—to her daughters, and not to us. They are spoken—as they should be—by Lady Bertram, and not by Jane Austen. Therefore we listen with content, and take comfort in the thought that, whatever severities may be inflicted on us by the novelists of the future, it is not in the power of progress to deprive us of the past.

A SHORT DEFENCE OF VILLAINS

AMID the universal grayness that has settled mistily down upon English fiction, amid the delicate drab-colored shadings and half-lights which require, we are told, so fine a skill in handling, the old-fashioned reader misses, now and then, the vivid coloring of his youth. He misses the slow unfolding of quite impossible plots, the thrilling incidents that were wont pleasantly to arouse his apprehension, and, most of all, two characters once deemed essential to every novel—the hero and the villain. The heroine is left us still, and her functions are far more complicated than in the simple days of yore, when little was required of her save to be beautiful as the stars. She faces now the most intricate problems of life; and she faces them with conscious self-importance, a dismal power of analysis, and a robust candor in discussing their equivocal aspects that

would have sent her buried sister blushing to the wall. There was sometimes a lamentable lack of solid virtue in this fair dead sister, a pitiful human weakness that led to her undoing; but she never talked so glibly about sin. As for the hero, he owes his banishment to the riotous manner in which his masters handled him. Bulwer strained our endurance and our credulity to the utmost; Disraeli took a step further, and Lothair, the last of his race, perished amid the cruel laughter of mankind.

But the villain! Remember what we owe to him in the past. Think how dear he has become to every rightly constituted mind. And now we are told, soberly and coldly, by the thin-blooded novelists of the day, that his absence is one of the crowning triumphs of modern genius, that we have all grown too discriminating to tolerate in fiction a character who we feel does not exist in life. Man, we are reminded, is complex, subtle, unfathomable, made up of good and evil so dexterously intermingled that no one element predominates coarsely over the rest. He is to be studied

warily and with misgivings, not classified with brutal ease into the virtuous and bad. It is useless to explain to these analysts that the pleasure we take in meeting a character in a book does not always depend on our having known him in the family circle, or encountered him in our morning paper; though, judged even by this stringent law, the villain holds his own. Accept Balzac's rule, and exclude from fiction not only all which might not really happen, but all which has not really happened in truth, and we would still have studies enough in total depravity to darken all the novels in Christendom.

What murder of romance was ever so wanton, so tragic, and so sombre as that which gave to the Edinburgh highway the name of Gabriel's Road? There, in the sweet summer afternoon, fresh with the breath of primroses and cowslips, the young tutor cut the throats of his two little pupils, in a mad, inexplicable revenge for their childish tale-bearing. Taken red-handed in the deed, he met with swift retribution from the furious populace; and the same

hour which witnessed the crime saw his pinioned corpse dangling from the nearest tree, with the bloody knife hung in awful mockery around its neck. Thus the murder and its punishment conspired to make the lonely road a haunted path, ghost-ridden, terrible; where women shivered and hurried on, and little boys, creepy with fear, scampered by, breathless, in the dusk; seeing before them always, on the ragged turf, two small, piteous, blood-smeared bodies, and hearing ever, overhead, the rattle of the rusty knife against the felon's bones. The highway, with its unholy associations discreetly perpetuated in its name, became an education to the good people of Edinburgh, and taught them the value of emotions. They must have indistinctly felt what Mr. Louis Stevenson has so well described, the subtle harmony that unites an evil deed to its location. "Some places," he says, "speak distinctly. Certain dark gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck. Other spots, again, seem to abide their destiny, sug-

gestive and impenetrable." And is all this fine and delicate sentiment, all this skillful playing with horror and fear, to be lost to fiction, merely because, as De Quincey reluctantly admits, "the majority of murderers are incorrect characters"? May we not forgive their general incorrectness for the sake of their literary and artistic value? Shall Charles Lamb's testimony count for nothing, when we remember his comfortable allusion to "kind, light-hearted Wainwright"? And what shall we think of Edward Fitzgerald, the gentlest and least hurtful of Englishmen, abandoning himself, in the clear and genial weather, to the delights of Tacitus, "full of pleasant atrocity"?

Repentant villains, I must confess, are not greatly to my mind. They sacrifice their artistic to their ethical value, and must be handled with consummate skill to escape a suspicious flavor of Sunday-school romance. The hardened criminal, disarmed and converted by the innocent attractions of childhood, is a favorite device of poets and story-writers who cater to the sentiments of maternity; but it is wiser to

lay no stress upon the permanency of such conversions. That swift and sudden yielding to a gentle emotion or a noble aspiration, which is one of the undying traits of humanity, attracts us often by the very force of its evanescence, by the limitations which prove its truth. But the slow, stern process of regeneration is not an emotional matter, and cannot be convincingly portrayed with a few facile touches in the last chapter of a novel. Thackeray knew better than this, when he showed us Becky Sharp touched and softened by her good little sister-in-law; heartsick now and then of her own troublesome schemes, yet sinking inevitably lower and lower through the weight of overmastering instincts and desires. She can aspire intermittingly to a cleaner life, but she can never hope to reach it. The simple literature of the past is curiously rich in these pathetic transient glimpses into fallen nature's brighter side. Where can we see depicted with more tenderness and truth the fitful relenting of man's brutality, after it has wrought the ruin it devised, than in the fine old ballad of *Edom*

O'Gordon? The young daughter of the house of Rodes is lowered from the walls of the burning castle, and the cruel Gordon spears transfix her as she falls. She lies dead, in her budding girlhood, at the feet of her father's foe, and his heart is strangely stirred and troubled when he looks at her childish face.

"O bonnie, bonnie was hir mouth,
And cherry were hir cheiks,
And clear, clear was hir yellow hair,
Whereon the reid bluid dreips.

"Then wi' his spear he turned hir owre,
O gin hir face was wan!
He sayd, 'You are the first that eir
I wisht alive again.'

"He turned hir owre and owre again,
O gin hir skin was whyte!
'I might hae spared that bonnie face
To hae been sum man's delyte.'"

It is pleasant to know that the ruthless butcher was promptly pursued and slain for his crime, but it is finer still to realize that brief moment of bitterness and shame. I have sometimes thought that Rossetti's Sister Helen would have gained in artistic beauty if, after those

three days of awful watching were over, after the glowing fragment of wax had melted in the flames, and her lover's soul had passed her, sighing on the wind, there had come to the stricken girl a pang of supreme regret, an impulse of mad desire to undo the horror she had wrought. The conscience of a sinner, to use a striking phrase of Mr. Brownell's, "is doubtless readjusted rather than repudiated altogether," and there is an absolute truthfulness in these sudden relapses into grace.

For this reason, doubtless, I find Mr. Blackmore's villains, with all their fascination and power, a shade too heavily, or at least too monotonously darkened. Parson Chowne is a veritable devil, and it is only his occasional humor—manifested grimly in deeds, not words—which enables us to bear the weight of his insupportable wickedness. The introduction of the naked savages as an outrage to village propriety; the summons to church, when he has a mind to fire the ricks of his parishioners,—these are the life-giving touches which mellow down this overwrought figure, this black

and scowling thunderbolt of humanity. Perhaps, also, Mr. Blackmore, in his laudable desire for picturesqueness, lays too much stress on the malignant aspect, the appropriate physical condition of his sinners. From Parson Chowne's "wondrous unfathomable face," which chills every heart with terror, to the "red glare" in Donovan Bulrag's eyes, there is always something exceptional about these worthies, to indicate to all beholders what manner of men they are. One is reminded of Charles II. protesting, not unnaturally, against the perpetual swarthiness of stage villains. "We never see a rogue in a play but we clap on him a black periwig," complained the dark-skinned monarch, with a sense of personal grievance in this forced association between complexion and crime. It was the same subtle inspiration which prompted Kean to play Shylock in a red wig that suggested to Wilkie Collins Count Fosco's admirable size. The passion for embroidered waistcoats and fruit tarts, the petted white mice, the sympathetic gift of pastry to the organ-grinder's

monkey, all the little touches which go to build up this colossal, tender-hearted, remorseless, irresistible scoundrel are of interest and value to the portrait, but his fat is as essential as his knavery. It is one of those master strokes of genius which breaks away from all accepted traditions to build up a new type, perfect and unapproachable. We can no more imagine a thin Fosco than a melancholy Dick Swiveller, or a light-hearted Ravenswood.

Mr. Andrew Lang, who enjoys upon all occasions the courage of his convictions, has, in one of those pleasant papers, "At the Sign of the Ship," given utterance to a sentiment so shockingly at variance with the prevalent theory of fiction, that the reader is divided between admiration for his boldness and a vague surprise that a man should speak such words and live. There is a cheerfulness, too, about Mr. Lang's heterodoxy, a smiling ignorance of his own transgression, that warms our hearts and weakens our upbraiding. "The old simple scheme," he says, "in which you had a real

unmitigated villain, a heroine as pure as snow or flame, and a crowd of good ordinary people, gave us more agreeable reading, and reading not, I think, more remote from truth, than is to be found in Dr. Ibsen's *Ghosts* or in his *Pillars of Society*." Now to support such a statement would be unscrupulous; to condemn it, dispiriting; but I wonder if the "real unmitigated villain" is quite so simple a product as Mr. Lang appears to imagine. May not his absence from literature be owing as much to the limitations as to the disregard of modern realists? Is he, in truth, so easily drawn as to be unworthy of their subtle and discriminating pens? Is Sir Giles Overreach a mere child's toy in comparison with Consul Bernick, and is Brian de Bois-Guilbert unworthy to rank with Johann Tönnesen and Oswald Alving? A villain must be a thing of power, handled with delicacy and grace. He must be wicked enough to excite our aversion, strong enough to arouse our fear, human enough to awaken some transient gleam of sympathy. We must triumph in his downfall, yet not barbarously nor with con-

tempt, and the close of his career must be in harmony with all its previous development. Mrs. Pennell has told us the story of some old Venetian witches, who were converted from their dark ways, and taught the charms of peace and godliness; but who would desire or credit the conversion of a witch? The potency of evil lies within her to the end; and when, by a few muttered words, she can raise a hell storm on the ocean; when her eye's dim fire can wither the strength of her enemy; or when, with a lock of hair and a bit of wax, she can consume him with torturing pain, who will welcome her neighborly advances? The proper and artistic end of a witch is at the stake—blue flames curling up to heaven, and a handful of gray ashes scattered to the wind; or, by the working of a stronger spell, she may be stiffened into stone, and doomed to stand forever on some desolate moor, where, underneath starless skies, her evil feet have strayed; or perhaps that huge black cat, her sinister attendant, has completed his ninth year of servitude to nine successive witches,

and, by virtue of the power granted him at their expiration, he may whisk her off bodily on St. John's Eve, to offer her a living holocaust to Satan. These are possibilities in strict sympathy with her character and history, if not with her inclinations; the last is in especial accordance with sound Italian tradition, and all reveal what Heine calls "the melancholy pleasurable awe, the dark sweet horror, of Mediæval ghost fancies." But a converted witch, walking demurely to vesper service, gossiping with good, garrulous old women on the doorstep, or holding an innocent child within her withered arms—the very thought repels us instinctively, and fires us with a sharp mistrust. Have a care, you foolish young mother, and snatch your baby to your breast; for even now he waxes paler and paler, as those cold, malignant heart-throbs chill his breath, and wear his little life away.

The final disposition of a mere earthly villain should likewise be a matter of artistic necessity, not a harsh trampling of arrogant virtue upon prostrate vice. There is no mistake

so fatal as that of injustice to the evil element of a novel or a play. We all know how, when Portia pushes her triumphant casuistry a step too far, our sympathies veer obstinately around to Shylock's side, and refuse to be re-adjusted before the curtain falls. Perhaps Shakespeare intended this,—who knows?—and threw in Gratiano's last jeers to madden, not the usurer, but the audience. Or perhaps in Elizabeth's day, as in King John's, people had not grown so finical about the feelings of a Jew, and it is only the chilly tolerance of our enlightened age which prevents our enjoying as we should the devout prejudices of our ancestors. But when, in a modern novel, guiltless of all this picturesque superstition, we see the sinner treated with a narrow, nagging sort of severity, our unregenerate nature rebels stoutly against such a manifest lack of balance. Not long ago, I chanced to read a story which actually dared to have a villain for a hero, and I promised myself much pleasure from so original and venturesome a step. But how did the very popular authoress treat her

own creation? In the first place, when rescued from a truly feminine haze of hints, and dark whispers, and unsubstantiated innuendoes, the hapless man is proven guilty of but three offences: he takes opium, he ejects his tenants, and he tries, not very successfully, to mesmerize his wife. Now, opium-eating is a vice, the punishment for which is borne by the offender, and which merits as much pity as contempt; rack-renting is an unpardonable, but not at all a thrilling misdemeanor; and, in these days of psychological research, there are many excellent men who would not shrink from making hypnotic experiments on their grandmothers. In consequence, however, of such feeble atrocities, the hero-villain is subjected to a species of outlawry at the hands of all the good people in the book. His virtuous cousin makes open and highly honorable love to his virtuous wife, who responds with hearty alacrity. His virtuous cousin's still more virtuous brother comes within an ace of murdering him in cold blood, through motives of the purest philanthropy. Finally, one of these virtuous young men lets

loose on him his family ghost, deliberately unsealing the spectral abiding-place; and, while the virtuous wife clings around the virtuous cousin's neck, and forbids him tenderly to go to the rescue, the accommodating spirit—who seems to have no sort of loyalty to the connection—slays the villain at his own doorstep, and leaves the coast free for a second marriage service. Practically, the device is an admirable one, because, when the ghost retires once more to his seclusion, nobody can well be convicted of manslaughter, and a great deal of scandal is saved. But, artistically, there is something repellent in this open and shameless persecution; in three persons and a hobgoblin conspiring against one poor man. Our sentiment is diverted from its proper channel, our emotions are manifestly incorrect.

"How are you to get up the sympathies of the audience in a legitimate manner," asks Mr. Vincent Crummles, "if there is n't a little man contending against a big one?—unless there's at least five to one, and we have n't hands enough for that business in our company."

What would the noble-hearted Mr. Crummles have thought of reversing this natural order of things, and declaring victory for the multitude? How would human nature, in the provinces, have supported so novel and hazardous an innovation? Why should human nature, out of the provinces, be assumed to have outgrown its simple, chivalrous instincts? A good, strong, designing, despicable villain, or even villainess, a fair start, a stout fight, an artistic overthrow, and triumphant Virtue smiling modestly beneath her orange blossoms—shall we ever be too old and world-worn to love these old and world-worn things?

A BY-WAY IN FICTION

NOW and then the wearied and worn novel-reader, sick unto death of books about people's beliefs and disbeliefs, their conscientious scruples and prejudices, their unique aspirations and misgivings, their cumbersome vices and virtues, is recompensed for much suffering by an hour of placid but genuine enjoyment. He picks up rather dubiously a little, unknown volume, and, behold! the writer thereof takes him gently by the hand, and leads him straightway into a fair country, where the sun is shining, and men and women smile kindly on him, and nobody talks unorthodox theology, and everybody seems disposed to allow everybody else the privilege of being happy in his own way. When to these admirable qualities are added humor and an atmos-

phere of appreciative cultivation, the novel-reader feels indeed that his lines have been cast in pleasant places, and he is disposed to linger along in a very contented and uncritical frame of mind.

There has come to us recently a new and beautiful edition of such a little book, published in America, but born of Italian soil and sunshine. It has for a title *The Chevalier of Pensieri-Vani, together with Frequent Allusions to the Prorege of Arcopia*, which is rather an unmerciful string of words to describe so gay and easy-going a narrative. It is the first full-fledged literary venture of its author, Mr. Henry Fuller, also known as Stanton Page, whose New England grandfather was a cousin of Margaret Fuller's. The story, which is not really a story at all, but a series of detached episodes, rambles backward and forward in such a bewildering fashion that the chapters might be all rearranged without materially disturbing its slender thread of continuity. It is equally guiltless of plot or purpose, of dramatic incidents or realistic details. The Chevalier may

be found now in Pisa, now in Venice, now in Ostia or Ravenna, never driven by the vulgar spur of necessity, always wandering of his own free and idle will. He is accompanied sometimes by his friend Hors-Concours, an Italianized Frenchman from Savoy, and sometimes by the Prorege of Arcopia, the delightful Prorege, who gives to the book its best and most distinctive flavor. At once dignified and urbane, conscious of his exalted position, and convinced that he fills it with equal grace and correctness, this superb official moves through the tale in an atmosphere of autocratic reserve, tempered with the most delicate courtesy. His ministerial views are as unalterable as the rocks, and as sound; but he listens to the democratic ravings of his young American *protégé*, Occident, with the good-humored indulgence one accords to a beloved and precocious child. It must be confessed that Occident fails to make his arguments very convincing, or to impress his own personality with any degree of clearness upon the reader's mind. He is at best only a convenient listener to the

Prorege's delicious theories ; he is of real value only because the Prorege condescends to talk to him. When he ventures upon a truly American remark about trying "to find the time" for something, his august friend reminds him, with dignity, that "the only man to be envied was the man whose time was in some degree his own, and the most pitiable object that civilization could offer was the rich man a slave to his chronometer. Too much had been said about the dignity of labor, and not enough about the preciousness of leisure. Civilization in its last outcome was heavily in the debt of leisure, and the success of any society worth considering was to be estimated largely by the use to which its *fortunati* had put their spare moments. He wrung from Occident the confession that, in the great land of which Shelby County may be called the centre, activity, considered of itself and quite apart from its objects and its results, was regarded as a very meritorious thing; and he learned that the bare figure of leisure, when exposed to the public gaze, was expected to be decorously draped in the gar-

ment of strenuous endeavor. People were supposed to appear busy, even if they were not. This gave the Prorege a text for a little disquisition on the difference between leisure and idleness."

In fact, a beautiul, cultivated, polished, unmarred, well-spent inactivity is the keynote of this serene little book; and to understand its charm and meaning we have but to follow the Chevalier, in the second chapter, to Pisa—to Pisa the restful, where "life is not strongly accentuated by positive happenings, where incident is unusual, and drama quite unknown." The Chevalier's windows, we are told, faced the north, and he sat and looked out of them rather more than active persons would deem pleasant or profitable. It even happened that the Prorege remarked this comfortable habit, and demanded of his friend what it was he looked at, inasmuch as there seemed to be no appreciable change from day to day. To which the Chevalier, in whom "Quietism was pretty successfully secularized; who knew how to sit still, and occasionally enjoyed doing so," replied

with great acumen that what *had* gone on was quite as interesting to him as what was going on, and that nothing was more gratifying, from his point of view, than that very absence of change which had taken his Excellency's attention—since any change would be a change for the worse.

He is destined, as it chances, to prove the truth of his own theories, for it is in Pisa, of all places, that he is tempted to throw aside for once his *rôle* of contemplative philosopher, and to assume that of an active philanthropist, with very disastrous results. There is an admirable satire in the description of the two friends, Pensieri-Vani and Hors-Concours, gravely plotting to insure the success of an operatic *débutante*, to bring her out in the sunshine of their generous patronage, and with the direct approval of the Prorege himself, who kindly consents to sit in the front of a middle box, and to wear a round half-dozen of his most esteemed decorations. Unhappily, an Italian audience does not like to have its enthusiasm expressed for it, even by such noble and consummate

critics. As each well-arranged device of flowers or love-birds in a gilded cage is handed decorously forward, the house grows colder and more quizzical, until the *débutante* sees herself on the extreme verge of failure, and, putting forth all her powers in one appealing effort, she triumphs by dint of sheer pluck and ability over the fatal kindness of her friends. The poor Chevalier, who has in the meantime left the theatre with many bitter self-communings, receives his lesson in a spirit of touching humility, recognizing at once his manifest limitations. "He perceived that he was less fitted to play the part of special providence than he had previously supposed; and he brought from this experience the immeasurable consolation that comes from knowing that very frequently in this sadly twisted world, things, if only left to their own courses, have a way of coming out right in the end."

The Pisan episode, the delicious journey of the Prorege and Pensieri-Vani in search of the "Madonna Incognita," a mysterious and illusive Perugino which turns out, after all, to

be a Sodoma, and the memorable excursion to Ostia, are the finest and best-told incidents in the book. The story of the Iron Pot is too broadly farcical, too Pickwickian in its character, to be in harmony with the rest of the narrative; the Contessa's fête at Tusculum is so lightly sketched as to be absolutely tantalizing; and the practical jokes which that lady and the Prorege delight in playing upon one another are hardly as subtle and acute as we would like to find them. Indeed, the Prorege's conduct on board his own yacht is so deeply objectionable that I, for one, positively refuse to believe he was ever guilty of such raw rudeness. It is not kind or right in Mr. Fuller to wickedly calumniate this charming and high-bred gentleman whom he has given us for a friend. Neither is the battle of the Aldines as thrilling as might be expected, probably because it is impossible to accept the Duke of Avon and Severn upon any terms whatever. Occident, the American, is misty and ill-defined; but he does not lack proportion, only vitality. The English duke is a mistake

throughout, a false note that disturbs the atmosphere of serene good temper which is the principal attraction of the book; an effort on the author's part to be severe and cynical, just when we were congratulating ourselves that severity and cynicism were things far, far remote from his tolerant and kindly spirit.

The excursion to Ostia, however, is enough to redeem the whole volume from any charge of ill-nature; for if the Contessa does seize this opportunity to play one of her dubious tricks upon the Prorege, it is not until the little group of friends have proved themselves gentle, and sympathetic, and full of fine and generous instincts. It is a delicious bit of description throughout. La Nullaniuna has been crowned the day before at her Tusculum fête as "the new Corinne," and naturally feels that her proper cue is that of "genius-blasted fragility," overpowered and shattered by her own impassioned burst of song. With her is the widowed Princess Altissimi, her cherished friend and foil, a sombre beauty of a grave and chastened demeanor, against whose dark background the

Contessa, "who was fully as flighty, and capricious, and *théâtrale* as a woman of semi-genius usually finds it necessary to be, posed and fidgeted to her heart's content." The Prorege, sublimely affable as ever, Pensieri-Vani, and young Occident, eager and radiant, make up the party; and after the little inn has furnished them with a noonday meal of unusual profusion and elegance, they visit the adjoining church at the instigation of the Princess Altissimi, who is anxious to see what this solitary and humble temple is like. All that follows is so exquisite that I must quote it as it stands, in proof of the author's faculty for delicate and sympathetic delineation:

"They were met on the threshold by the single priest in charge, a dark and sallow young man of peasant extraction, whose lonely battle with midsummer malaria had left him wholly gaunt and enervate. He saluted them with the deference which the Church sometimes shows to the World, though he was too true an Italian to be awed, or even embarrassed by their rank; and he brightened up

into something almost like eagerness as he offerred to do the honors of his charge. The Prorege indulgently praised the wretched frescoes which he exhibited so proudly, and the Contessa called up a flickering smile of pleasure in his emaciated face as she feigned an enthusiasm for the paltry fripperies of the high altar. This appreciative interest emboldened him to suggest their ascent to the gallery, where, from his manner, the great treasure of the church was to be revealed. The great treasure was a small cabinet organ, and Occident—triumphing in the ubiquity of the Western genius, yet somewhat taken back by this new illustration of the incongruities it sometimes precipitated—read upon it a name familiar to his earliest years. The priest, who evidently conceived it an impossibility for his beloved instrument to be guilty of a discord of any kind whatever, pleaded with a mute but unmistakable pathos that its long silence might now be ended; and the Princess, motioning Pensieri-Vani to the keyboard, sang this poor solitary a churchly little air, with such a noble

seriousness and such a gracious simplicity as to move, not only him, but all the others too. Occident, in particular, who kept within him quite unimpaired his full share of that fund of sensibility which is one of the best products of Shelby County, and who would have given half his millions just then to have been able to sit down and play the simplest tune, implored Pensieri-Vani in looks, if not in words, to do for him what he himself was so powerless to compass; and the Cavaliere, who, like a good and true musician, preferred support from the lowest quarter to indifference in the highest, kept his place until their poor host, charmed, warmed through and through, attached again to the great body of humanity, could scarcely trust himself to voice his thanks. But the Princess whispered in the Cavaliere's ear, as his series of plain and simple little tunes came to an end, that he had not lost since she last heard him."

There is nothing finer in the story than this, perhaps nothing quite so good, though all of Pensieri-Vani's journeys are fruitful in minute

incidents of a pleasant and picturesque quality. It is curious, too, to see how the Chevalier, who, except for that catlike scratching about the Aldines, is the gentlest and least hurtful of men, manifests at times a positive impatience of his own refined and peaceful civilization, a breathless envy of sterner races and of stormier days. When he discovers the tomb of the old Etrurian warrior, he is abashed and humbled at the thought of that fierce spirit summoned from thirty centuries of darkness to see the light of this invertebrate and sentimental age; requested to forget his deep draughts of blood and iron, and to contentedly "munch the dipped toast of a flabby humanitarianism, and sip the weak tea of brotherly love." When he stands in the dim cathedral of Anagni, and contemplates the tombs of the illustrious Gaetani family, and the mosaics which blazon forth their former splendors, he shrinks with sudden shame from the contrast between his feeble, forceless will and the rough daring of that mighty clan. "The stippling technique of his own day seemed immeasurably poor and paltry

compared with the broad, free, sketchy touch with which these men dashed off their stirring lives; and he stood confounded before that fiery and robust intensity which, so gloriously indifferent to the subtilties of the grammarian, the niceties of the manicure, and the torments of the supersensitive self-analyst, could fix its intent upon some definite desire, and move forward unswervingly to its attainment. Poor moderns! he sighed, who with all our wishing never reach our end, and with all our thinking never know what we really think."

These unprofitable musings of the Chevalier's seem to reflect some recurring discontent, some restless, unchastened yearnings on the part of the author himself; but they find no echo in the serene breast of the Prorege. He at least is as remote from envying the hostilities of the past as he is innocent of aspiring to the progressiveness of the future. He is fully alive to the merits of his own thrice-favored land, where the evil devices of a wrong-headed generation have never been suffered to penetrate: "Arcopia, the gods be praised, was exempt from the

modern curse of bigness. One chimney was not offensive; but a million made a London. One refuse-heap could be tolerated; but accumulated thousands produced a New York. A hundred weavers in their own cottages meant peaceful industry and home content; a hundred hundred, massed in one great factory, meant vice and squalor and disorder. Society had never courted failure or bid for misery more ardently than when it had accepted an urban industrialism for a basis. . . . Happily the Arcopian population, except a fraction that followed the arts and another fraction that followed the sea, was largely agricultural, and exhibited in high union the chief virtue and the chief grace of civilized society—order and picturesqueness. The disturbing and ungracious catch-word, 'Égalité,' had never crossed the Arcopian sea; if the Prorege had not been tolerably sure that his mild sway was to be undisturbed by the clangor of cantankerous boiler-makers and the bickerings of a bumptious, shopkeeping *bourgeoisie*, he would never have undertaken the task at all. He regarded him-

self as a just, humane, and sympathetic ruler, but he believed that every man should have his own proper place and fill it."

Such are the views smilingly detailed to the puzzled and outraged Occident, who, having been nourished in boyhood on the discourses of rustic theologians, and the forensics of Shelbyville advocates, finds it difficult to assimilate his own theories of life with a civilization he so imperfectly understands. He doubts his ability to take the European attitude, he doubts the propriety of the attitude when taken, and the struggle ends in the usual manner by his marrying a wife, and going back to Shelby County to be a good citizen for the rest of his days. Hors-Concours, mindful of the duties entailed on the proprietor of a small patrimony and an ancient name, espouses with becoming gravity and deliberation the Princess Altissimi. The Prorege retires to Arcopia the blessed, whither we would fain follow him if we could; and Pensieri-Vani, left desolate and alone, consoles himself with the reflection that life has many sides, and that Italy has not yet

given up to him all she has to give: "Others might falter; but he was still sufficient unto himself, still master of his own time and his own actions, and enamored only of that delightful land whose beauty age cannot wither, and whose infinite variety custom can never stale."

COMEDY OF THE CUSTOM HOUSE

THERE is no place in the world where human nature is so thoroughly human or so purely natural as on the New York docks, when a great steamer load of returning travelers are being put through the *peine forte et dure* of the United States custom house. Everybody is striving to play a part, to assume an air of indifference which he does not feel, and of innocence which he knows to be fallacious; and, like Mrs. Browning's Masker, everybody betrays too plainly in his "smiling face" and "jesting bold" the anxiety that preys upon his vitals. Packed snugly away in that wilderness of trunks and boxes are hundreds, nay, thousands, of pretty trifles, which it is the painful duty of every man, and the proud ambition of every woman, to carry in unscathed and undetected. The frank, shameless delight which a woman takes in smuggling

has long puzzled the male moralist, who, following the intricacies of the feminine conscience, can find no satisfactory explanation of this by-path. He cannot bring her to understand why, when she has purchased and paid for an article, it should not be hers to take where she likes, to deal with as she pleases; and a dozen discourses on political economy and the laws of nations leave her unshaken in this simple and primitive conception. As the English are said to argue best in platoons, so a woman argues best in action; and, while her husband or brother is proving to her in the clearest possible fashion that a high protective tariff is a blessing to the land, she is assiduously storing away embroidered table covers, and silk stockings, and silver spoons, and tortoise-shell combs, and tiny jeweled pins, and bits of frail Venetian glass, wherever her practiced eye tells her they will best escape detection. In the abstract, of course, dear Edwin is right—he always is—but she is far too busy with her task to enter into abstractions just now. Whatever mental subtlety she

possesses is reserved for a much more important ordeal—that of getting clear, with a clean conscience, from the searching questions of the inspector. "When I am asked if I have any presents I always answer no," said a devout, church-going woman to me one day, "because I do not consider them presents until I give them away."

The grim, perplexed seriousness with which the customs officers play their part makes a delightful foil (for the spectators) to the nimble, elusive mental movements of their adversaries; and it is in the conflict between aggressor and aggrieved, between invader and invaded, that the humors of our great national institution develop their choicest bloom. The fortunes of war which recently delayed my own boxes and my hoped-for escape, gave me, by way of compensation, an easy opportunity of observing and enjoying the experiences of other people, and I was encouraged in my diversion by the too evident glee of one of the minor actors in the strife. She was a very pretty girl, this gay young combatant, not

more than sixteen years old, and she sat kicking her heels on somebody else's trunk, while she watched with enviable composure the overhauling of her own. I had seen her often during the homeward voyage, and had spoken to her once or twice as she tripped endlessly up and down the deck in company with every man and boy on board; taking them impartially, one by one, and seeming to be on the same mysterious terms of intimacy with all. She had a traveling companion in the shape of a mother who adored her fretfully, and whom she treated with finely mingled affection and contempt. She never spoke of this relative without the prefix "poor." "Poor mother is awfully sick to-day," she would say in her shrill, high-pitched voice, with a laugh which showed all her little white teeth, and sounded a trifle unsympathetic in our ears. But five minutes later she was helping "poor mother" to her steamer chair, wrapping her up skilfully in half a dozen rugs and shawls, bullying the deck steward to bring her some hot bouillon, bullying her to drink the bouillon when brought,

listening to her manifold complaints with an indulgent smile, and flatly refusing to obey, when entreated to put on a warmer jacket.

"Poor mother is always worrying about wraps," was her only acknowledgment of the maternal solicitude; and even this remark was made, not to her prostrate parent, but to the youth who was waiting to bear her away.

The pair had been traveling alone all summer, but were met on the docks by a person whom they both called "cousin Jim," and who assured them in a hearty, offhand manner that he would have them safe through the custom house in five minutes; a miscalculation, as it turned out, of quite three-quarters of an hour. Malignant fate assigned them an inspector who settled down to his search like an Indian to the war trail, and who seemed possessed with the idea that the wealth of the Indies lay secreted somewhere in those two shabby, travel-worn boxes. Whether this man was really enamored of his disagreeable task, whether he conscientiously believed that the United States would be impoverished and her indus-

tries crippled by the contents of that modest luggage, or whether he had been too pliable on former occasions, and seized this chance to assert his general incorruptibility, it would be hard to determine; but while older and less ardent officials lifted out trays and turned over corners in a purely perfunctory manner, seeing nothing, and seeking to see nothing of what lay beneath, this red-hot zealot went thoroughly and exhaustively to work upon the limited materials before him. Now the particular irritation of the custom house lies, not in the fact of your trunk being searched, but of your neighbor's trunk escaping; and the sharpest sting is when you chance to know that your neighbor is carrying in unmolested ten times the value of your dutiable articles. If Miss Maisie, kicking her heels and smiling affably, did not realize the hardship of her position, Miss Maisie's mother—she never had any other name, her sole claim to distinction resting on her daughter—felt it very keenly. She stood, anxious and angry, by the side of the inspector, protesting fretfully at each new in-

road, and appealing for sympathy to her companions.

"It's a perfect shame, the way he has rumpled your dresses, Maisie, and upset that tray you packed so nice and close. You will never be able to get the things back again in the world, and, if you do, one half of them will be broken before we reach home. And there's your new fur cape all out of fold. I told you to wear it, or carry it in on your arm. No! that is not a present; at least I think not, is it, Maisie?" as a small brown paper parcel, carefully tied, was held up by the inspector for scrutiny.

"I can't tell till I open it," said the girl, reaching over, and very deliberately unfastening the string. "You don't remember what this is, do you, mother? Oh! I see—a piece of camphor. No, it's not a present. We brought it from America. Lasts beautifully, doesn't it?" returning the parcel with a smile. "Would you mind wrapping it up again? It's so very hard to tie anything in gloves."

Apparently the inspector did mind, for he

jerked the lump of camphor unwrapped into the trunk, and made a vicious scoop among the layers of neatly packed clothing. "Is this a present, then?" he asked, drawing to light a flat oblong white box, and snapping the cord that bound it. Inside, resting on pink cotton wool, was a small silver-backed hand-mirror of fine workmanship. "Surely this must be a present?" he repeated, with the triumphant air of one who has dragged a secret crime to justice.

Maisie's mother looked nervous, and fidgeted visibly, but Maisie herself was imperturbable. "You are mistaken; it is not," she said, without a tremor.

The man glanced at her sharply, and shrugged his shoulders. "You keep it very nicely put away for an article in use," he hinted, turning over the box once or twice with manifest doubt and reluctance. "And these—are all these your own, too?" unearthing from some secret receptacle six little card-cases of blue leather, and spreading them out jeeringly in a row.

"I told you not to get so many, Maisie, but

you would do it," said her mother, in the hopeless tone of a convicted criminal.

"They were such bargains, I couldn't resist them," answered the girl sorrowfully. "Yes, they are presents; at least five of them are. I guess I will keep one for myself, and save that, any way. Just put one of them back, please. And oh, dear! do you have to lift out that heavy tray? There are nothing but clothes at the bottom of the trunk."

"Nothing at all but clothes," interposed her mother peevishly. "I don't see why you have to go through everything in this fashion."

"Nothing at all but clothes," repeated cousin Jim, who had hitherto stood staring silently at the confusion before him. "Can't you take the ladies' word for it, when they assure you there is nothing underneath but clothes?"

"My dear sir," said the inspector, exasperated into insolence, "I should be very glad to take any lady's word, but I can't. I've learned a great deal better."

Maisie's mother colored hotly, with the righteous indignation of a woman who lies easily,

and is accused of falsehood; but Maisie, screwing her pretty head on one side, winked at me in shameless enjoyment of the situation. "He'll find I'm right this time," she whispered; "but wasn't it lucky he got it into his stupid brain that the glass must be a present! If he had said 'commission' now, I should have been caught, and the friend I bought it for would be simply furious if I had to pay duty on it. Poor mother insisted that I should not take a single commission this summer, so I only have very few; just that glass, and some gloves, of course, and a feather collar, and half a dozen pairs of stockings, and a little silk shawl from Rome. One girl did ask me to buy her a dress in Paris, but I wouldn't do it; and another wanted a pair of blue slippers, but fortunately I forgot her size; and another—"

"Maisie, dear, do put back your things now," interrupted her unhappy parent, who by this time was on the verge of tears. "The inspector has finished with your trunk, and is going to mine. And please be careful of your cape! I wish you had worn it instead—"

"Instead of my old one?" said the girl hastily, smoothing down, as she spoke, a very handsome and palpably new piece of sealskin on her shoulders. "Poor mother is so blundering," she sighed softly in my ear. "I am wearing this cape for Dr. Hunsdale. He is bringing it home to his sister, and of course wouldn't have any shadow of a chance with it himself. Indeed, he intended to declare it, which would have been a dreadful shame. So I just offered to pack mine and wear this one. Lots of girls do, you know. I've got a watch here for another man, too," lightly touching the châtelaine by her side. "Not a gold one. Only a little silver thing he bought for *his* sister, who is a child. Poor mother doesn't know about that, or she would be more miserable still; and she is pretty miserable now, isn't she?" contemplating her perturbed relative with gentle disfavor. "You see, she worries so, she makes that man believe we have something tremendously valuable somewhere, and he is bent on finding it out. There, he's after our Roman blankets; but those are for our-

selves, and, what is more," raising her voice, "we have had them in use for nearly three months."

"Three months isn't long enough," returned the official surlily. "You must have had them in use a year, to bring them in free."

"A year!" echoed Maisie, opening her round eyes with innocent amazement. "If you knew much about Roman blankets, you wouldn't expect anybody to use them for a year, and then think them worth bringing home. What a thrifty lot the custom-house people must be! Poor mother! She never expected to pay for those, and it does seem a little hard on her. But what's that he's got now? Oh! *do* look!" for the inspector had grabbed something loosely wrapped in white tissue paper, and was holding it aloft with an exultant shake, and an "I've-tracked-you-at-last" expression. Down fell a rubber shoe, of unmistakable American manufacture, but richly crusted with layers of foreign mud. It flopped modestly into the bottom of the trunk, and was greeted with a ringing laugh of genuine, uncontrolled delight. "That's a present," sobbed the girl, literally

choking with mirth, "and very valuable. We brought it from the South Kensington, and are going to send it to the Metropolitan Museum as soon as we reach home."

"Maisie, how can you be so foolish!" protested her mother, roused by desperation to some faint semblance of authority, and visibly anxious to propitiate the inspector, who looked ominously angry. "If you will wrap such absurd things in white tissue paper, naturally people think they are of some value."

"But we had so much tissue paper in London, and nothing else to wrap with," was the very reasonable reply. "Fifteen sheets the tailor sent home with my one frock, and I am keeping most of it to use at Christmas time. Poor old shoe!" lifting it tenderly out of the trunk; "if mud were a dutiable article—and I only wonder it isn't—you would come very expensive just now. Swiss mud, too, I do believe, never brushed off since that day at Grindelwald, and quite a relic. Don't you think," turning suddenly to me, "don't you really think all this is fearfully funny?"

In one sense I did, though the fun was of a strictly esoteric character, not appealing broadly to the crowd. But then Mr. Saintsbury assures us that real fun seldom does. Poor mother's sense of humor was plainly unequal to the demand made upon it; cousin Jim, who had not spoken since his first repulse, looked more bewildered than amused; and even the inspector did not seem vastly entertained by the situation. The trunks had been examined, and their contents sadly disarranged; the handbags searched, and found to contain only toilet articles and underwear; the steamer rugs, unrolled, revealed nothing more precious than an old magazine and four battered French novels. As a result of over half an hour's inquisition, the authorities had possessed themselves of two well-worn Roman blankets, a pretty, inexpensive little fan, painted on brown linen, a beer mug of Munich ware, and those five blue card-cases that had been so cheap in Paris. It hardly seemed as if the spoils were worth the conflict, or as if the three dollars and ninety cents duty charged on them could be a

serious addition to the revenues of the United States. But the home-coming of one poor woman had been marred, and no salt-tax of ancient France was ever paid with more manifest reluctance and ill-will.

"It's the burning injustice of the thing I mind, Maisie," was the vehement protest hurled at the inspector's back. "There were plenty of people all around whose trunks were hardly touched. I watched one man myself, and he never lifted out a single thing—just turned the corners a little, and smoothed all down again. He was examining the Hardings's luggage, too, and I know they have five times as much as we have—really costly, beautiful things—and they never paid a cent."

"But we didn't pay a great deal," returned the girl cheerfully. She was down on her knees now, deftly rearranging the disordered trunks. "Think of all our man might have found, and did n't."

"Think of the shameful condition he left our clothes in!" said her angry mother. "It is an outrage. And those blankets! Everybody

brings them, and nobody but ourselves has to pay. The Hardings had them, I know, and so did Miss Rebecca Chambers, and Mrs. Starr; and they all came in free."

"Yes, but Mr. Maitland was charged four dollars duty on a pair he bought for twenty shillings in London, and he presented them to the custom-house officers rather than give their value over again," said Maisie triumphantly.

"Did he, really?" cried her mother, brightening up wonderfully under the beneficent influence of other people's misfortunes. "What a shame! Four dollars duty on twenty-shilling blankets! I never heard of anything so preposterous."

"Yes, and Dr. Carson gave them a silver watch he had brought over for his little boy, rather than pay the duty on that, it was so high," continued Maisie, who seemed to know the fate and fortunes of every passenger on board.

Her mother's face relaxed from fretfulness into smiles. "I wonder he doesn't sue the government, or something," she remarked, with

feminine vagueness. "I am sure I should. It is a good thing, Maisie, we had no watches to bring."

The girl chuckled softly, and shook the little châtelaine by her side. "Yes, it *is* a good thing," she said, with an air of simple conviction. "After all, we did get off pretty cheap. And it was almost worth the money to see the delicious flourish with which that muddy old overshoe tumbled on the scene. Don't *you* think," turning once more appealingly to me, "that three dollars and ninety cents was little enough to pay for such a sight?"

Perhaps I did. A laugh is always worth its price, and in these serious days grows rare at any figure. Besides, when a great republic condescends to play an active part in even an indifferent comedy, it is ill-timed to grumble at the cost.

MR. WILDE'S *INTENTIONS*

EVER since the first printers with misguided zeal dipped an innocent world in ink, those books have been truly popular which reflected faithfully and enthusiastically the foibles and delusions of the hour. This is what is called "keeping abreast with the spirit of the times," and we have only to look around us at present to see the principle at work. With an arid and dreary realism chilling us to the heart, and sad-voiced novelists entreating us at every turn to try to cultivate indecorous conduct and religious doubts, fiction has ceased to be a medium of delight. Even nihilism, which is the only form of relief that true earnestness permits, is capable of being overstrained, and some narrowly conservative people are beginning to ask themselves already whether this new development of "murder as a fine art" has not been sufficiently encouraged. Out of

the midst of the gloom, out of the confusion and depression of conflicting forms of seriousness, rises from London a voice, clear, languid, musical, shaken with laughter, and speaking in strange, sweet tones of art and beauty, and of that finer criticism which is one with art and beauty, and claims them forever as its own. The voice comes from Mr. Oscar Wilde, and few there are who listen to him, partly because his philosophy is alien to our prevalent modes of thought, and partly because of the perverse and paradoxical fashion in which he delights to give it utterance. People are more impressed by the way a thing is said than by the thing itself. A grave arrogance of demeanor, a solemn and self-assertive method of reiterating an opinion until it grows weighty with words, are weapons more convincing than any subtlety of argument. "As I have before expressed to the still reverberating discontent of two continents"—this is the mode in which the public loves to have a statement offered to its ears, that it may gape, and wonder, and acquiesce.

Nothing can be further from such admirable solidity than Mr. Wilde's flashing sword-play, than the glee with which he makes out a case against himself, and then proceeds valiantly into battle. There are but four essays in the volume, rather vaguely called *Intentions*, and of these four only two have real and permanent value. "The Truth of Masks" is a somewhat trivial paper, inserted apparently to help fill up the book, and "Pen, Pencil, and Poison" is visibly lacking in sincerity. The author plays with his subject very much as his subject, "kind, light-hearted Wainwright," played with crime, and in both cases there is a subtle and discordant element of vulgarity. It is not given to our eminently respectable age to reproduce the sumptuous and horror-laden atmosphere which lends an artistic glamor to the poisonous court of the Medicis. This "study in green" contains, however, some brilliant passages, and at least one sentence—"The domestic virtues are not the true basis of art, though they may serve as an excellent advertisement for second-rate artists"—that must make Mr. George Moore

pale with envy, when he reflects that he missed saying it, where it belongs, in his clever, truthful, ill-natured paper on "Mummer-Worship."

The significance and the charm of Mr. Wilde's book are centred in its opening chapter, "The Decay of Lying," reprinted from *The Nineteenth Century*, and in the long two-part essay, entitled "The Critic as Artist," which embodies some of his most thoughtful, serious, and scholarly work. My own ineffable content rests with "The Decay of Lying," because, under its transparent mask of cynicism, its wit, its satire, its languid mocking humor, lies clearly outlined a great truth that is slipping fast away from us—the absolute independence of art—art nourished by imagination and revealing beauty. This is the hand that gilds the grayness of the world; this is the voice that sings in flute tones through the silence of the ages. To degrade this shining vision into a handmaid of nature, to maintain that she should give us photographic pictures of an unlovely life, is a heresy that arouses in

Mr. Wilde an amused scorn which takes the place of anger. "Art," he says, "never expresses anything but itself. It has an independent life, just as Thought has, and develops purely on its own lines. It is not necessarily realistic in an age of realism, nor spiritual in an age of faith. So far from being the creation of its time, it is usually in direct opposition to it, and the only history that it preserves for us is the history of its own progress." That we should understand this, it is necessary to understand also the "beautiful untrue things" which exist only in the world of fancy; the things that are lies, and yet help us to endure the truth. Mr. Wilde repudiates distinctly and almost energetically all lying with an object, all sordid trifling with a graceful gift. The lies of newspapers yield him no pleasure; the lies of politicians are ostentatiously unconvincing; the lies of lawyers are "briefed by the prosaic." He reviews the world of fiction with a swift and caustic touch; he lingers among the poets; he muses rapturously over those choice historic masterpieces, from Herodotus

to Carlyle, where "facts are either kept in their proper subordinate position, or else entirely excluded on the general ground of dulness." He laments with charming frankness the serious virtues of his age. "Many a young man," he says, "starts in life with a natural gift for exaggeration, which, if nurtured in congenial and sympathetic surroundings, or by the imitation of the best models, might grow into something really great and wonderful. But, as a rule, he comes to nothing. He either falls into careless habits of accuracy, or takes to frequenting the society of the aged and the well-informed. Both things are equally fatal to his imagination, and in a short time he develops a morbid and unhealthy faculty of truth-telling, begins to verify all statements made in his presence, has no hesitation in contradicting people who are much younger than himself, and often ends by writing novels that are so like life that no one can possibly believe in their probability." Surely this paragraph has but one peer in the world of letters, and that is the immortal sentence wherein De Quincey

traces the murderer's gradual downfall to incivility and procrastination.

"The Critic as Artist" affords Mr. Wilde less scope for his humor and more for his erudition, which, perhaps, is somewhat lavishly displayed. Here he pleads for the creative powers of criticism, for its fine restraints, its imposed self-culture, and he couches his plea in words as rich as music. Now and then, it is true, he seems driven by the whips of our modern Furies to the verge of things which are not his to handle—problems, social and spiritual, to which he holds no key. When this occurs, we can only wait with drooping heads, and what patience we can muster, until he is pleased to return to his theme; or until he remembers, laughing, how fatal is the habit of imparting opinions, and what a terrible ordeal it is to sit at table with the man who has spent his life in educating others rather than himself. "For the development of the race depends on the development of the individual, and where self-culture has ceased to be the ideal, the intellectual standard is instantly lowered, and

often ultimately lost." I like to fancy the ghost of the late Rector of Lincoln, of him who said that an appreciation of Milton was the reward of consummate scholarship, listening in the Elysian Fields, and nodding his assent to this much-neglected view of a much-disputed question. Everybody is now so busy teaching that nobody has any time to learn. We are growing rich in lectures, but poor in scholars, and the triumph of mediocrity is at hand. Mr. Wilde can hardly hope to become popular by proposing real study to people burning to impart their ignorance; but the criticism that develops in the mind a more subtle quality of apprehension and discernment is the criticism that creates the intellectual atmosphere of the age.

HUMORS OF GASTRONOMY

"THERE does not, at this blessed moment, breathe on the earth's surface a human being that willna prefer eating and drinking to all ither pleasures o' body or soul." So speaks the Ettrick Shepherd, in the fulness of his content, contemplating with moist eyes the groaning supper-table, laden with a comfortable array of solid viands; after which fair and frank expression of his views we are somewhat pained to hear him denouncing in no measured terms "the awful and fearsome vice o' gluttony," as evidenced occasionally in women. His companions, too, those magnificent fellow-feeders, have a great many severe things to say about gudewives who betray a weakness for roasted pork, or an unfeminine solicitude for gravy; and Mr. Timothy Tickler unhesitatingly affirms that such a one, "eating for the sake of eating, and not for mere nourishment, is, in

fact, the grossest of sensualists, and at each mouthful virtually breaks all ten of the commandments." This is the language of an ascetic rather than of a *bon vivant*, but we are in some measure reassured when the same Mr. Tickler confesses, a little later, that, although roast goose always disagrees with him, yet he never refuses it, believing that to purchase pleasure by a certain degree of pain is true philosophy; whereupon the Shepherd, not to be outdone, gives it as his unreserved opinion that, in winter-time at least, "eating for eating's sake, and in oblivion o' its feenal cause, is the most sacred o' household duties."

From these somewhat inharmonious sentiments we reluctantly infer that gluttony is a vice—or a virtue—for man only, and that woman's part in the programme is purely that of a ministering angel. Adam was made to eat, and Eve to cook for him, although, even in this humble sphere, she and her daughters have been doomed to rank second in command. Excellent in all things, but supreme in none, they have never yet scaled the dazzling

heights of culinary fame. The records of antiquity make no mention of their skill; the middle ages grant them neither praise nor honor; and even as late as Dr. Johnson's day they labored hard for scanty recognition. It is very painful to hear the great sage speaking lightly of our grandmother's oracle, Mrs. Glasse, and declaring with robust contempt that women were fit to spin, but not to write a book of cookery. Yet for how many years had they modestly held their peace; profiting, doubtless, in many a roomy kitchen and in many a well-stocked buttery by the words of wisdom which vainglorious men let fall; and only now and then giving help and counsel to one another by means of little private recipe-books, which were circulated among a few noble families, and were considered as their own exclusive property and pride.

Opulence and a taste for display, upon the one side, and the natural conservatism of the great Saxon stock, upon the other, fought the battle of the table from the days of the Black Prince down to those of Anthony Trollope,

and will, in all probability, fight it to the end. "A cod's head for fourpence, and nine shillings' worth of condiments to serve with it," was the favorite sarcasm which greeted the growing extravagance of the rich middle classes. Those costly "subtleties" imported from French kitchens in the fifteenth century met with a sturdy opposition from British freemen, who, even while they gaped and marveled, resented such bewildering innovations. The pelican sheltering her young, and Saint Catherine, book in hand, disputing with the doctors, which figured among the dishes at the coronation of Henry V.; the hundred and four "dressed" peacocks, trailing their plumes gorgeously over the table at the consecration of Archbishop Neville, affronted more than one beef-eating gentleman, and exasperated more than one porridge-eating churl. From France, too, came certain heresies regarding the fitness of food which Englishmen had for centuries devoured and digested. Queen Elizabeth dined upon whale; Cardinal Wolsey, who was something of an epicure, and

who first taught us that strawberries and cream were intended by a beneficent nature to set off each other's merits, did not disdain to have a young porpoise served up at one of his banquets. Fish soup was a delicacy, and we are even assured by antiquarians that the grampus, or sea-wolf, was freely eaten by our strong-stomached ancestors.

But foreign cooks looked doubtfully upon these national dainties, and, in place of the old-time gravies, which were simply the broths in which meat had been boiled, flavored with a little ginger and sugar, delicate and highly seasoned sauces were devised for the tempting of weary appetites. Italy sent forks—those curious and uncanny implements—which were received with scornful indignation, as calculated to destroy the simplicity and manliness of Great Britain. Spoons and knives were held in slight esteem, for good soup could be swallowed from the bowl, and his sacred Majesty, Charles XII. of Sweden, was not the only monarch who buttered his bread with his royal thumb. But forks were contemptible affecta-

tions. As honest Master Breton observed, he had done no foul work, and handled no unwholesome thing, and consequently had no need of an instrument with which to make hay of his food and pitch it into his mouth. So, too, the time-honored custom of man and wife eating out of one trencher was falling into rapid disuse, and Walpole tells us that the old Duke and Duchess of Hamilton were the last couple in England who retained the fashion of their youth. Meats were growing daintier and dearer all the while. The ordinary or inn dinner, which in Elizabeth's day cost sixpence, had risen to tenpence in the reign of George I., and soon crept up to a shilling. In every generation there were plenty of grumblers to lament over the good old times that had fled, and we catch the echo of this undying cry in the modern protests against unwelcome fashions. Thackeray and Trollope railed perpetually at that feeble striving after an impossible elegance which had well-nigh destroyed the cheery conviviality of their youth; and Peacock, the prince of good livers, with whom the

pleasures of the intellect and the appetite walked amicably hand in hand, has recorded his still more vehement denunciation: "I detest and abominate," says Mr. Macborrowdale, "the idea of a Siberian dinner, where you just look on fiddle-faddles, while your meal is behind a screen, and you are served with rations like a pauper."

The scorn of the true Briton for alien delicacies was repaid with interest by the Frenchman, who regarded his neighbor's groaning table very much as we might regard the doubtful provender of a cannibal chief. The contempt for frog-eating foreigners, on the one hand, was not greater than the contempt for beef-eating islanders, on the other; in fact, all nations, from Egypt down, seem to have cherished a wholesome dislike and distrust for each other's food. The British officer who, at the attack on Cadiz, shouted to his men, "You Englishmen, who are fed upon beef, don't surely mean to be beaten by a d——d lot of Spaniards, who live on oranges!" made a stronger appeal to human nature than did Napoleon with his

famous "forty centuries;" and the reverse of the medal may be seen in Talleyrand's description of England, as a land where there were twenty-four religions and only one sauce. Twenty-four religions would make but a poor showing in these days, when even a serious novel can beget a new one; but sauces are not so lightly called into being. Those "slibber sops" which brought "queesiness to the stomach and disquiet to the mind" of John Lyly were hard to rout from the field; and they were still holding their own when Brillat-Savarin, the most serene and kindly of epicures, first visited Great Britain. With Savarin, eating was more than a mere vulgar pleasure; it was a solemn and yet exquisite duty which man owed to himself, and to a generous nature that had yielded him up her bounties for this purpose. Mr. Birrell says that Burke's letters on carrots "tremble with emotion," and there is a like earnestness about all of Savarin's recipes; a pathetic anxiety lest some ingredient should be omitted or ill-used. For fish he entertains a profound respect; for game, a

manly affection ; for pastries, a delicate regard ; but truffles are the beloved darlings of his heart. It contents him greatly to sit at table with congenial spirits ; to watch "the eagerness of desire, the ecstasy of enjoyment, and, finally, the perfect repose of bliss on every countenance," when the noble meal is ended. Surely even the Reign of Terror might have dealt tenderly with such a man as this, since patriots are unswerving eaters, and it behooved them to remember that "the discovery of a new dish does more for the happiness of mankind than the discovery of a new planet."

All of Savarin's apothegms evince the same frank and warm-hearted regard for the welfare of others; the same unremitting anxiety to teach them what to eat and how to eat it. He entreats us never to forget that, when we have invited a man to dine, we have, for a short time at least, his happiness in our hands. The dinner table, he reminds us, is the only place where men are not hopelessly bored for the first hour, and during that hour it is our privilege to make them enamored of life. A

cook is, in his eyes, a true scientist, with mighty capacities for good and evil. He believes, with Baudelaire, that such a one should have the soul of a poet, and—like the too fastidious Parisian, who declared that between Mme. du Deffand's *chef* and the Marquise de Brinvilliers "there was only the difference of intention"—Savarin has no words of reproach strong enough for those who debase and shame their noble calling. He is prompt to recognize the exigencies of a slender purse, and unwearying in his efforts to provide *menus* fitted to its limitations; but his notions of economy are somewhat like those of the little French princess, who said that rather than starve she would live on bread and cheese. The famous *omelette au thon*, for instance, with all its air of pastoral simplicity, contains the roes of two carp, a piece of tunny, an eschalot, twelve eggs, and a number of other ingredients which would hardly recommend it to a poor country parsonage. As for the Abbé Chevrier's spinach, which was warmed up with butter for seven days before it reached the acme of deli-

cacy, we can only wonder at the admirable patience of the Abbé's cook, who would return seven times with unremitting industry to the consideration of a single dish.

It will be observed, however, how many gastronomical triumphs we owe to clerical genius, or to the researches of the true philosopher. Lord Bacon thought it no shame to bend his mighty mind to kitchen problems, and Dr. Nowel, the learned and pious dean of St. Paul's, was rightfully proud of the bottled beer which he first gave to his astonished and grateful country. The earliest list of recipes in England was the work of an archbishop. The Jesuits in the seventeenth century carried the turkey from its native haunts, and introduced it to the best French society, who received it with the rapture it deserved. The famous *mayonnaise* is not the only delicacy which Richelieu bequeathed to the world; Talleyrand devoted one hour out of every busy day to the exclusive companionship of his cook; and the Regent Orleans was pleased to give his own name to the bread of his own baking.

What a kindly spirit of good-fellowship we discern in the frank epicureanism of Sydney Smith! what generous sympathy for a *bon vivant* whose lines have led him into desert places! "Luttrell came over for a day," he writes, "from whence I know not, but I thought not from good quarters; at least he had not his usual soup and patti look. There was a forced smile upon his countenance which seemed to indicate plain roast and boiled, a sort of apple-pudding depression, as if he had been staying with a clergyman." How creditable, too, is his anxiety to please Luttrell, when that amiable sybarite becomes *his* guest! "Mrs. Sydney," he declares, "grows pale with alarm as the rich dishes are uncovered;" and yet so admirable a housewife might have shared in the superb confidence of Lord Worcester when cautioned by Sir Henry Halford to leave all such indiscreet messes alone. "Side dishes," said the great physician, "are poison." "Yours may be," retorted Lord Worcester; "and I should never dream of eating them, but mine are a very different story." So, too,

were Sydney Smith's, and the celebrated salad which gained for him nearly as wide a reputation as his wit was only one of many famous recipes, and probably no greater in its way than the mysterious pudding whose secret he imparted as an especial favor to the importunate Lady Holland. Those who had the happiness of sitting at his table rose from it with tranquil gratitude, "serenely full," and conscious, let us hope, of his own graceful sentiment,

"Fate cannot harm me—I have dined to-day."

There is one more subject to consider; one more aspect of the case, fraught with tender and melancholy associations. Like the lost joys of our youth; like the taste for apple-dumplings, which Lamb recognized as belonging only to those whose innocence was unimpaired; like the vanishing of gentle thoughts with a growing distaste for asparagus; so is the sorrowful blank left in our lives by the recollection of noble dishes that have been, and that are no longer. What of that lost rec-

ipe of Menander's for fish sauce—an ambrosial sauce whose fame has flitted down to us from dim ages, and the eating of which would have filled to the brim Dr. Johnson's cup of happiness? And what of its modern counterpart, now also gone forever, the famous green sauce which La Coste offered to Sir Thomas Dundas at the Duke of York's table, whispering to him with unctuous fervor, "*Avec cette sauce là, on pourrait manger son grand-père*"? What of the bream-pie that disappeared with the good monks, driven from British soil, and the mere recollection of which caused Peacock to bewail in spirit the too rapid dissolution of the monasteries? And what of sack—*Falstaff's* sack—that made England the merry England of yore, and that took flight, like some old-fashioned genius, before the sombre days that were to follow? Surely if we knew its secret, we should learn how to laugh once more.

But alas! this may not be. We have but the memories of past good cheer; we have but the echoes of departed laughter. In vain we

look and listen for the mirth that has died away. In vain we seek to question the gray ghosts of old-time revelers.

> "Still shall this burden their answer bear,
> What has become of last year's snow?"

CHILDREN IN FICTION

MR. RUDYARD KIPLING has prefaced his little volume of *Child Stories* with a modest intimation that he finds the subject almost beyond his grasp. He says:

"Only women understand children thoroughly; but if a mere man keeps very quiet, and humbles himself properly, and refrains from talking down to his superiors, the children will sometimes be good to him, and let him see what they think about in the world. Yet, even after patient investigation and the condescension of the nursery, it is hard to draw babies."

This sounds disarming, and at the same time strikes a popular note respecting these fortunate little people, who, after having been considered for many years as unworthy of the novelist's regard, have now suddenly grown too complex and subtle for him to hope to understand. Mr. Kipling himself approaches them with great caution, and treats them with careful conventionality, except in that pitiful

bit of realism, "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep," where the misery and swift deterioration of a child are almost too painfully portrayed. Punch, with his dim comprehension of his own unhappiness, and his pathetic attempts to be friendly and "oblige everybody;" Punch, swaying alternately from clumsy deception to helpless rage, badgered into sullenness, and betrayed by the inherent weakness of his poor, peace-loving little soul, is a picture burdened with bitter truth, drawn with revengeful fidelity. Once, I am sure, a half-blind, solitary boy measured those lonely rooms in hand spans: "fifty down the side, thirty across, and fifty back again—one hundred and eighty-one exactly from the hall door to the top of the first landing." Once, I am sure, he knocked his blundering head against the walls, and upset the glasses that he tried to grasp, in the gathering gloom of his doubly darkened life.

But when we turn from the sad sincerity of "Black Sheep" to the brighter atmosphere of the other tales, we find nothing very genuine or convincing about the happier children who figure

in them. "Drums of the Fore and Aft" is an exceedingly clever story, and Lew and Jakin may be typical British drummer boys, but to the uninitiated reader they seem a trifle overdrawn both for good and evil. They know so much and talk so marvelously; they are so very bad and so very upright; and they insert such a bewildering number of "bloomin's" into their conversation, that, like the eternal "well" with which Mr. Howells's women begin all their sentences, the word loses its *vraisemblance* through unbearable repetition. "His Majesty the King," even when we forgive him his cumbersome title which destroys all good-fellowship at once, is a child dear to story-writers, and consecrated to their uses for many years, but so exceedingly rare in every-day life that he has to be taken strictly on faith; while "Wee Willie Winkie" is even more unveracious in his character. These wonderful babes, with their sense of honor, and chivalry, and manhood, these Bayards in pinafores, these miniature editions of King Arthur and Sir Launcelot rolled into one, are picturesque possibilities

only when we have forgotten what an earthly little animal a real boy is. Willie Winkie rides into a forbidden and dangerous country to protect and rescue a woman nearly old enough to be his mother. He is keenly and conscientiously distressed because, having been told to keep within doors, he has thus "bwoken" his "awwest;" but he feels it his paramount duty to pursue and guard from evil the able-bodied betrothed of his father's friend. When Miss Allardyce accommodates herself to circumstances by promptly wrenching her ankle, and the pair are surrounded by ruffians of the skulking, cowardly Indian type whom Mr. Kipling paints with such generous scorn, we are gravely told: "Then rose from the rock Wee Willie Winkie, child of the Dominant Race, aged six and three-quarters, and said briefly and emphatically, '*Jao!*'" What "*Jao*" means is lost to our occidental ignorance, but the effect is magical. The twenty armed men thus confronted and defied are awed into milder measures, and finally routed with shame, while the hero of the hour restores the prostrate heroine

unharmed—save for the wrenched ankle—to her lover's anxious embraces.

This is very amusing, but a little absurd, and a little vulgar as well. It strikes that jarring note of provincialism which Matthew Arnold condemns with all the weight of his critical eloquence in Kinglake's "Invasion of the Crimea." "Wee Willie Winkie, child of the Dominant Race," is on a literary level with the description of Marshal St. Arnaud, cowed by "the majesty of the great Elchi's Canning brow and tight, merciless lips;" a style of writing bad enough in newspaper correspondence, but unpardonable in artistic fiction. How has it happened that Mr. Kipling, who tells us with such irresistible grace and simplicity the "Story of Muhammad Din," should stray into mock heroics when handling the children of his own nation, the jolly well-bred little English lads, to whom all picturesque posing is an art unknown.

Perhaps the trouble lies in the curious but highly esteemed fallacy that the child of fiction is expected to be always precocious and spright-

ly, to emit sparks like a cat, and electrify the sluggish atmosphere about him. He does this at the expense alike of his sincerity and of his manners; we cannot accept him as a fact, and we don't approve of him as a theory. A few years ago a critic in the *Contemporary Review* protested very seriously against such writers as Florence Montgomery, "by whom the bloom of unconsciousness has been wiped from childhood, and boys and girls have learned to see themselves, not like old-fashioned children, as good and naughty, but as picturesque beings, whose naughtiness has an attractive charm, and whose very imperfections of dialect are worth accurate record." Most of us are only too familiar with this kind of fiction, which for a time enjoyed such great and hurtful popularity. The patronizing attitude of children to their parents is sufficiently illustrated by the really nice little boy in "Transformed," who calls his father "Puppy," a most objectionable thing for a nice little boy to do; while what might be termed the corrective attitude of children to their parents is still more sharply defined

by that unpleasant child, Nina Middleton, who sees so clearly, and suffers so intensely from the "careless superficiality" and rigid narrowness of the unfortunate couple whose painful privilege it was to have given her birth.

One of the latest types, however, to seize and hold the hearts of the big, sentimental, child-loving public is Mrs. Burnett's Lord Fauntleroy, who may be best described as the good little boy with the clothes. It is quite impossible to separate him in our minds from his wardrobe, to divest him of his velvet suits and sashes, his "rich Vandyke lace collar," his leggings and neat little Oxford ties. He is always and in all places "a small copy of the fairy prince," picturesquely grouped with a dog, or a cat, or a pony, as circumstances direct. We cannot be coarse enough to imagine him with cropped hair, and muddy boots, and a torn jacket, and a hole in his stocking, like so many, many real little boys who daily break their mothers' hearts by their profound neglect of appearances. He is so ready in conversation, too, and pays such charming compliments to pretty

young ladies, instead of hustling into corners and staring owlishly, after the fashion of those awkward little boys I know. And he is so very, very good! Not consciously and morbidly virtuous like that baby prig, Little Saint Elizabeth, who comes from the same hands, but artlessly and inevitably correct. He gives all his money to pay poor Michael's rent, and we rejoice rightly in his generosity, with only one wistful recollection of that vastly different specimen of boyhood, for whose misdeeds Mr. Aldrich is responsible, and who spends his funds gloriously in indigestible treats to his friends. It is very charming in Lord Fauntleroy to offer his eager plea in behalf of the farmer Higgins, and probably just what any warm-hearted child would have done in his place; but we cannot but contrast his wonderful unconsciousness afterward, "not realizing his own importance in the least," with the familiar figure of little Paul Dombey strutting up and down the room at Brighton, full of the new-blown dignity of being a financier, and lending young Gay the money for his uncle.

It would take the sternest of moralists to object to Paul's infantile strut; it would take the most trusting of sentimentalists to believe that Cedric is quite as innocently unconscious as he seems.

There is a remarkably nice little girl in that pleasant English novel, published a few years ago, *Sir Charles Danvers*—a little girl who can be safely recommended to all child-lovers, who will only wish they could hear a great deal more about her. Molly Danvers is not particularly precocious; she is not at all supersensitive, and we are not even told that she is pretty. There is absolutely no inventory given of her personal charms; and as to her clothes, "a white frock and two slim black legs" are casually mentioned on her first introduction, and we never hear another word about them. "A white frock and two slim black legs!" Could any description be more meagre? Imagine Little Saint Elizabeth, or Sara Crewe, reduced ruthlessly to a white frock, and not another allusion to their wardrobes in the whole course of their histories. But Molly does n't

care. I have a suspicion that her white frocks don't stay white very long, and that her slim black legs are better distinguished for activity than for grace. She is anything but heroic, and runs fleetly away from danger, leaving both her cousin and her donkey to their fate; but she has a loving little heart, nevertheless, and when her terrier dies, this heart is as nearly broken as a healthy little girl's can be.

"'He is *dead*, Uncle Charles. He was quite well, and eating Albert biscuits with the dolls this morning, and now'—the rest was too dreadful, and Molly burst into a flood of tears, and burrowed with her head against the faithful waistcoat of Uncle Charles—of Uncle Charles, the friend, the consoler of all the ills that Molly had so far been heir to.

"'Vic had a very happy life, Molly,' said Charles, pressing the little brown head against his cheek, and vaguely wondering what it would be like to have any one to turn to in time of trouble.

"'I always kept trouble from him except that time I shut him in the door,' gasped Molly. 'I never took him out in a string, and he only wore his collar—that collar you gave him that made him scratch so—on Sundays.'

"'And he was not ill a long time? He did not suffer any pain?'

"'No, Uncle Charles, not much. But, though he did

not say anything, his face looked worse than screaming, and he passed away very stiff in his hind-legs. Oh!' (with a fresh outburst) 'when cook told me that her sister that was in a decline had gone, I never thought' (sob, sob!) 'poor Vic would be the next.'"

This is not the less heartrending for being amusing, and that short sentence "his face looked worse than screaming" is a masterstroke of realistic description. On the whole, for ordinary family purposes, Molly Danvers is one of the nicest little girls I know; and if we seek—as many people rightly seek—for the poetry, the beauty of childhood, subtly transferred to paper, let us turn back a few years, and re-read for the fifth or the fiftieth time, as it chances, those seven delicious chapters of *Quatre-Vingt-Treize*, which describe a single day in the lives of the three babies, René Jean, Gros Alain, and Georgette. How many hours must Victor Hugo have watched patiently and gladly the ways of little children before he could paint them with such minute and charming truth, and what sheer delight is embodied in every line! They do nothing remarkable,

these tiny French peasants; they say nothing worth noting; they are clothed in rags; they are alone all day; they are mischievous, healthy, and natural. They hang enchanted, all three, over a wood-louse, their curls touching, their breath suspended, their eyes fixed on the embarrassed insect: and we watch them with a joy and wonder equal to their own. "It is a she-creature," announces René Jean, and Georgette laughs, Georgette who, at twenty months, has not yet acquired the art of conversation. She utters a single word from time to time, but sentences lie beyond her scope. She is occupied with grave thoughts, and when she breathes a soft monosyllable, her brothers pause encouragingly to listen. A belated bee comes buzzing in the window and departs.

"'She is going home,' said René Jean.

"'It is a beast,' said Gros Alain. 'No,' said René Jean, 'it is a fly.' 'A f'y,' said Georgette."

This is the extent of their conversational powers, and how very limited it seems. They do not talk, these babies; they act. They lay their destructive hands on the rare old folio of

Saint Bartholomew, and tear out the leaves one by one, solemnly, innocently, conscientiously. Georgette, who cannot reach the volume, sits on the floor, and tears each leaf into little pieces with painstaking amiability; and all three are so happy over their self-appointed task. By the side of their absolute unconsciousness, the Willie Winkies and Lord Fauntleroys of romance grow suddenly Utopian and unreal. The chivalry, honor, generosity, loyalty, picturesqueness, and brilliancy, all the story-book virtues of story-book children, seem less winning and less dear than the birdlike contentment of three silent, sleepy little creatures, curled softly together, and painted by a master's hand.

THREE FAMOUS OLD MAIDS

IT is a curious fact that three of the most successful and eminent literary women in England—Miss Austen, Miss Edgeworth, and Miss Mitford—should have been typical old maids; not merely unmarried through stress of intervening circumstances—ill health, early disappointment, or a self-sacrificing devotion to other cares—but women whose lives were rounded and completed without that element which we are taught to believe is the mainspring and prime motor of existence. To understand how thoroughly this was the case, we have but to turn to a later and very different writer, Charlotte Brontë, who married when she was thirty-eight, and died one year afterward, and whose whole literary life was accordingly passed in spinsterhood. Yet if that very grave and respectable gentleman, the Rev. Mr. Nicholls, had never appeared upon

the scene at all, it would have been impossible to call Miss Brontë a typical old maid. She had the outward signs of one, indeed, the prim demeanor, the methodical habits, the sarcastic attitude toward the male sex ; but burning in every fibre of her being, and evident in every page of her writings, is that fierce unrest, that inarticulate, distressful longing of a woman who craves love. We can easily imagine Elizabeth Bennet, and the very sensible Elinor Dashwood, and even Emma Woodhouse, dearest and brightest of girls, slipping from their lovers' grasp and growing into old maids as charming as was Miss Austen herself; but poor plain Jane Eyre, and that reticent little school-teacher, Lucy Snowe, are shaken and consumed with the passion of their own desires. Such women cannot walk from the cradle to the grave, handling their lives with delicate satisfaction and content ; they must find what they need or die.

It is amusing to note how the various critics and biographers of Miss Austen, Miss Edgeworth, and Miss Mitford have debated and

fretted over the painful lack of romance in their careers. Feminine critics, especially, find it difficult to believe that there is no hidden tale to tell, no secret and justifiable cause for this otherwise inexplicable behavior ; and much time and patience have been exhausted in dragging shadowy memories to light. In the case of Miss Mitford, indeed, it seems quite hopeless to search for even the ghost of a love-story, and, although she certainly did devote her life with touching unselfishness to the comfort and support of a very exacting father, it cannot for a moment be urged that, in so doing, she relinquished any distinct desire or prospect of matrimony. Perhaps the exasperating qualities of her parent inclined her unconsciously to remain single ; for, with all her unsparing devotion, she must, in the course of sorely tried years, have grown to regard men very much as Dolly Winthrop regarded them, —"in the light of animals whom it had pleased Heaven to make naturally troublesome." Mr. Mitford, a most genial and handsome old gentleman of the Turveydrop pattern, managed

to keep his daughter's hands full of work, and her heart full of love, and left her little chance or disposition for any wandering fancies. All the exuberant affection of her girlhood, all the mature attachment of later years, were concentrated upon him alone. Her youth waned, her freshness faded, her indomitable courage and cheerfulness quailed a little before the ever-increasing burdens of her life; but through it all, in joy and sorrow, no shadow of a suitor stands beckoning by her side. Her serene old age was haunted by no dim voices crying out of the past for the joy which had slipped from her grasp. She wrote love-stories by the score, always approaching the subject from the outside, and treating it with the easy conventionality, the generous yet imperfect sympathy of a warm-hearted woman not prone to analyze motives. They are very pleasant stories for the most part, sensible, healthy, and happy; but they are not convincing. The reader feels that if Polly did not marry Joe she would be just as well satisfied with William, and that if Edwin failed to win Angelina he would soon

content himself with Dorothy. This is a comfortable state of affairs, and doubtless true to life ; but it is not precisely the element which makes a successful love-tale. The fact is, Miss Mitford described things pretty much as she found them, not seeking to dive below the surface, and always adding a little sunshine of her own. She was a happy woman, save for some sad years of overwork, and her life was full of pleasant detail, of cherished duties, and of felicitous labor ; but, from first to last, love had no part in it, and, fancy free, she never reckoned of her loss.

Miss Edgeworth, too, seems to have been lifted from the sphere of matrimony by the unusual strength of her family affections. Her devotion to her father, to her two stepmothers, and to her nineteen brothers and sisters was of such an absorbing nature as to leave her little leisure or inclination for mere matters of sentiment. She was so busy too, so full of pleasant cares, and successful work, and a thousand-and-one delightful interests ; above all, she clung so fondly to her home, and country, and

the familiar faces she had known from babyhood, that love had no chance to storm her well-defended walls. When that handsome and earnest young Swede, he of the "superior understanding and mild manners," came to woo, he found, alas! that the lady could not tear her heart away from Ireland and her beautiful young stepsisters to give it to his keeping. She acknowledged his merits, both his mildness and his superiority, she liked and admired him in every way; but marry and go to Sweden!—that she would not do, either for M. Edelcrantz or any other man. Mrs. Edgeworth, who was distinctly sentimental, and who would have been delighted to see her clever stepdaughter happily wedded, says quite touchingly that Maria was mistaken in the strength of her own feelings; that she really loved M. Edelcrantz, but refused to marry him because her family could not bear to part with her, because "she would not have suited his position at the court of Stockholm," and because she feared her lack of beauty would one day lessen his regard. Shadow of

shadows! Was there ever a woman who declined to marry the man she truly loved for such cloud-built reasoning as this! Maria was doubtless the darling of her own home circle, and would have been sorely missed had she winged her flight to Sweden; but there were daughters enough in that overflowing household to admit of one being spared. As for the other obstacles, it is hardly possible that they should have been urged seriously by a woman as free from morbid sentiment as was Miss Edgeworth. There is a sweet humility which is born of love, and which whispers to most women—and, probably, to some men—that they are unworthy of the choice which has fallen upon them, of the jewel which has been flung at their feet. But to push this delicate emotion so far as to sacrifice happiness at its bidding is not the impulse of a sound and healthy nature. Miss Edgeworth could never have been pretty, and had spent most of her life in retirement; but she was by no means unacquainted with the ways of the world, by no means destitute of womanly charms, and,

above all, by no means without the exhilarating consciousness of success. In fact, when we read her biography, we are principally impressed by the amount of adulation she received, by the extraordinary enthusiasm her pleasant tales aroused. The struggling novelist is tempted to wish that he also might have lived in those halcyon days, until he remembers that a far greater writer, Miss Austen, had no share in this universal and unbounded applause. Miss Edgeworth was as much the pet of the literary world as of her own household and friends. She had little need to doubt her powers, or to fear neglect and indifference. If she really regretted poor M. Edelcrantz—who went back to Sweden with a sore heart and never married anybody else—she gave no outward token of repentance, but lived to be eighty-two, the most cheerful and radiant of old maids, faithful to the last to her family affections, and happy to die in the midst of those who had made the sunshine of her life.

It is in the case of Miss Austen, however, that truly strenuous efforts have been made to

cultivate a passable romance upon scanty soil. Miss Austen was pretty, she was gay, she possessed an indefinable attraction for men, and she was in turn attracted by them, as a healthy-minded, happy-hearted girl should be. Her letters to Cassandra are full of amusing confidences on the subject—confidences far too amusing, in fact, to give any sign or token of genuine feeling beyond. She writes with buoyant cheerfulness about Mr. Tom Lefroy, for whom she "does not care sixpence," yet prefers him to all other competitors, who must have ranked pitiably low in the scale. "I am almost afraid," she confesses, "to tell you how my Irish friend and I behaved. Imagine to yourself everything most profligate and shocking in the way of dancing and sitting down together. I *can* expose myself, however, *only once more*, because he leaves the country soon after next Friday, on which day we *are* to have a dance at Ashe after all. He is a very gentlemanlike good-looking, pleasant young man, I assure you."

Not without grave fault though it would

seem, for a little later we hear of a morning coat which is much too light to please Jane's critical eye. She cannot possibly give her maiden affections to a man who would wear such a coat, and so, after a while, he disappears from her pages and her life, to go out into the world, and win much legal renown, and be Chief Justice of Ireland, and always to remember with great tenderness the gay young girl at Ashe. Then there appears on the scene that unnamed friend of Mrs. Lefroy's, whose love is so sudden and fervent that Miss Austen feels quite sure it will soon decline into "sensible indifference," as, no doubt, it does. Then the suitor who has "the recommendation of good character, and a good position in life, of everything in fact except the subtle power of touching my heart"—which seems to have been the real difficulty with them all. Sir Francis Doyle, indeed, tells a very pretty and pathetic tale of Jane Austen's engagement to a naval officer who, after the peace of 1820, accompanied his *fiancée* and her family to Switzerland. Here he started off on foot one

fine morning, promising to meet his friends at Chamouni. He never came, and they waited and waited with fast-growing fears, only to learn, when all was over, that the young man had been seized with a sudden fever, and had died, unknown and scantily cared for, in some poor cottage home. It is a sad story, but happily does not rest upon any shadow of foundation. Miss Austen never was engaged, and never was in Switzerland; and although Sir Francis had the tale from a friend, who had it from a member of the family, it merely goes to prove that even relatives are not wholly incapable of weaving romances out of thin air, rather than be, like the knife-grinder, without a tale to tell.

Mrs. Malden, Jane Austen's enthusiastic biographer, discredits most unhesitatingly this particular love-legend, while at the same time she manifests a lively desire to give form and color to another, scarcely less intangible. The third chapter in her little volume is enticingly headed "Her Life's One Romance," and in it is narrated at some length the story of an attractive

young clergyman whom Jane and Cassandra Austen met one summer at a seaside resort in Devonshire. He openly admired the younger girl, and, when they parted, "impressed strongly on the sisters his intention of meeting them again." He died, however, shortly after, and Jane neither gave any outward token of grief, nor indulged in any confidences on the subject. Nevertheless, Cassandra, whose own youth was shadowed by the blight of a lost love, was wont to say, after her sister's death, that she believed this to have been her one and only romance; and Miss Thackeray, in her sympathetic sketch of Miss Austen, alludes very sweetly and very confidently to the tale.

"Here, too," she says, "is another sorrowful story. The sisters' fate (there is a sad coincidence and similarity in it) was to be undivided; their life, their experience, was the same. Some one without a name takes leave of Jane one day, promising to come back. He never comes back: long afterwards they hear of his death. The story seems even sadder than Cassandra's in its silence and uncertainty,

for silence and uncertainty are death in life to some people."

But if there is one thing more than another to be avoided and ruthlessly condemned, it is this quiet assumption that a woman has parted with her heart, when she herself has breathed no word to warrant it. The cheerful serenity of Jane Austen's daily life showed no ripple of storm, her lips told no tale; and why are we to assume that a young man whom she met for a few idle weeks and never saw again had broken down the barriers of that self-possessed nature, had overcome the gay indifference which showed no signs of hurt? As for the popular theory that Anne Elliot's gentle enduring love and poor Fanny Price's hours of bravely borne pain were imaged from the depth of their author's experience, we have but to remember that the same hand gave us Harriet Smith, with her fluctuating, lightly won affections, and Charlotte Collins, sensible and happy, enjoying her pleasant home, and enduring—or avoiding—her solemn, pompous, servile, stupid husband. As well connect one

type as another with the genius that revealed them all.

"Of Jane herself I know no definite love-tale to relate," says her nephew and biographer, Mr. Austen Leigh; and this seems about the conclusion of the matter. "No *man's* life could be more entirely free from sentiment," admits, very reluctantly, one of her cleverest critics. "If love be a woman's chief business, here is a very sweet woman who had no share in it. It is a want, but we have no right to complain, seeing that she did not shape her course to please us."

This is a generous reflection on the critic's part; but is the want so painfully apparent as he thinks, or may we not be well content with Jane Austen as we have her, the central figure of a little loving family group, the dearest of daughters and sisters, the gayest and brightest of aunts, the most charming and incomparable of old maids?

THE CHARM OF THE FAMILIAR

THOSE persons are happiest in this restless and mutable world who are in love with change, who delight in what is new simply because it differs from what is old; who rejoice in every innovation, and find a strange alert pleasure in all that is, and that has never been before. With little things as with big ones, this sentiment is the sentiment of our day. "Unrest," says Schopenhauer, "is the mark of existence," and the many trifling details of ordinary life evince on every side the same keen relish for novelty, the same careless disregard of the familiar. Especially is this the case with women, who feel less wistfully than men the subtle charm of association, and who have less sympathy than men for the dear, faulty, unlovely, well-loved things of their youth. No woman could have written those pathetic lines of Mr. Lang's on St. Andrews:

"A little city, worn and gray,"

the memory of whose rainwashed, desolate streets blots out from his mind all the beauty and the splendor of Oxford. And—to descend from serious to frivolous subjects—no woman can wholly appreciate that pleasant sketch of Mr. Barrie's, called "My Tobacco Pouch," which reveals a mental condition absolutely inexplicable to the most astute feminine apprehension. It is the instinctive desire of our sex for modernism that keeps rolling the great ball of trade. Manufacturers and shopkeepers would starve in common if they catered only to men, who not infrequently have a marked preference for the archaic. But women, to use the words of Sir Thomas Browne, are "complexionally propense to innovation." With wonderful pliancy and adaptability they fit easily into new surroundings, make homes out of new houses, fill their rooms with new objects, and grasp a fair share of happiness in the enjoyment of novelty in every form, whether of fashion, art, literature, religion or philanthropy.

But what of the unfortunate few who, through some strange moral twist, are "com-

plexionally propense" to sameness; who feel a passionate regret for what has been lost, and a passionate reluctance to part with what is fast slipping away; and who, as the great world rolls relentlessly on its appointed course, find themselves "forever broken on the wheel of time"? The journal of that stout old Tory, Sir Francis Doyle, betrays a strong dislike, not only for political upheavals, which are very uncomfortable and disturbing things, but for innovations of any kind. "Nothing can be so good as what is old," says Mr. Lang; and Mr. Peacock tranquilly declares that all the really valuable opinions have been uttered a thousand years ago. Amid the noisy blare with which the trumpets of progress herald every move, comes thrilling now and then a note of protest from some malcontent who does not part so easily with the past, and for whom familiarity lends to every detail of life a merit and beauty of its own. It almost seems as if two-thirds of mankind were hard at work improving away the happiness of the remaining third, and bidding them at inter-

vals to stop grumbling and appreciate the change.

When it chances that these familiar details are associated in the mind with pleasures, early pleasures especially, the memory of which lingers with the sweetness of honey, then the pain of parting with them is utterly disproportioned to their worth. I have never been able to understand how people can rebind an old book, or reframe an old picture, if the book or the picture have been in any way dear to them for years. How strange and unfriendly these objects look in their new dress! How remote they seem from the recollections hitherto aroused by their presence! One of the minor grievances of my life is the gradual disappearance from the theatres of all the old drop-curtains I can remember since my childish days. Perhaps the new curtains are better than the old ones—I hear persons say as much occasionally—but to me they are simply hideous, because their native ugliness is unsoftened by any gracious memory of those far-off nights when, feverish with delight, I sat star-

ing at the stretch of painted canvas, and anticipating all the joys that lay behind. There was no moment of transport equal to that which saw the slow ascent of the mystic veil, revealing inch by inch the enchanted scenes beyond; and I still believe that if I could behold once more those dear, familiar landscapes, some portion of the old, lost pleasure would return. Three curtains are indelibly associated with these hours of supreme happiness; and I recall them all three now as the most beautiful pictures in the world. One—and this, I think, was the first I ever saw—represented an Italian view, with a lively volcano in the background, and, in front, a long-legged shepherd lad reclining on the marble steps of a fountain, while his flock loitered lazily around. Another displayed four stout and dropsical nymphs preparing for, or resting from, a hunt; this fact being adroitly intimated by the presence of some very long bows, and some very lean greyhounds. The third was a seaport town, with vessels lying in harbor, and a little terrace running to the water's edge,

on which terrace I have taken many a stroll in spirit, waiting for the wonders to come. Not that the waits were ever long in those vanished days. On the contrary, the whole evening flew by on wings of fire, and the only thought that marred my perfect felicity was the haunting consciousness that it would too soon be over. And the theatres were never hot, or stuffy, or draughty, when I was a child; and the lights were never glaring, but shone with a gentle radiance; and the chairs were softer than down; and the music was noble and inspiring; and the actors were men of genius; and the actresses were ravishingly beautiful; and the scenery was sublime; and the plays were wondrously witty; and the paste jewels were dazzling; and *ennui* was unknown; and I never, never, *never*, wished I had stayed at home. What new drop-curtain hides from me now the rapturous illusions of my youth?

Another grievance, more palpable because less inevitable than the replacing of worn-out theatre properties with fresh ones, is the passion of publishers for altering the covers of

their magazines. This is the strangest act of vandalism that an unholy zest for novelty ever prompted in the human bosom. Why a magazine cover is selected in the first place, remains, in most cases, an unfathomed mystery. It is seldom a thing of beauty, but, once associated with the agreeable visitor that every month brings some new tidings to our door, it acquires for us all the subtle charm of familiarity. Nothing can well be more stiff and ungraceful than the design of *Blackwood;* that wilted, conventional border, and that wreath of prickly Scotch thistles, defending rather than decorating the vignette of the founder,

"With eyes severe and beard of formal cut."

The whole cover seems to say, "Stand off, rash mortal! There is nothing here for you!" Yet to lose it would be to lose an old, surly, faithful and long-tried friend. I sometimes feel that *Blackwood* is not as readable as it was when I was a girl—it is the privilege of increasing years to think all magazines were better when we were young—but for that very

reason I am glad to greet the ancient thistles that alone remain defiant and unchanged.

American publishers, however, are as delighted to offer their readers a new cover as a new story, and it is occasionally interesting to follow a magazine through all its outer vicissitudes. There was a time when *Saint Nicholas* behaved like Harlequin in the pantomime, slipping into fresh costumes with bewildering alertness and rapidity. *The Century* has adopted a plan eminently fitted to confuse and distress people who are in love with the familiar, and who have barely time to accustom themselves to one of the picturesque young women on its cover, before they are confronted with another. The only engaging and comforting thing about these rival damsels is their strong family resemblance. They are like the fair daughters of Doris, with faces "neither the same nor different, but as those of sisters should be." The wanton alterations in *Harper's Magazine* are none the less heartbreaking for being so trivial. As well rob us of an old friend altogether as tamper with his abso-

lute integrity. No one can claim for *Harper* that its time-honored cover has any rare artistic quality, any of that subtle and far-reaching suggestiveness that we prize so wearily to-day. On the contrary, its little boys scattering roses into nowhere, and its preposterous child blowing soap bubbles on a globe belong distinctly to the cheerful school of Philistia, and are not burdened with meanings of any kind. That makes them so refreshing to our eyes; and besides I have always regarded them with sincere affection, because of the pleasure they afforded me in infancy. It was one of the unwritten laws of our nursery that, when a new magazine arrived, the old one passed into our possession. We painted all the pictures with water colors, and we cut out the little figures on the cover for paper dolls. Not the child straddling over the globe! It was impossible to make anything out of him, owing to his uncomfortable position. But the lads in tunics we thought extremely pretty, especially the one in the right-hand corner, whose head was as round as a bullet. The left-hand boy had a slightly

flattened skull, which destroyed his perfect symmetry, though we occasionally remedied this defect by leaving him a small portion of his basket, and pretending it was hair. Now, alas! though the children still mount guard on their flower-wreathed pedestals, and still scatter their roses in the air, some unkind hand has wrought radical changes in their aspect. They have grown bigger, stouter, and their decent little tunics, so nicely drawn up over one shoulder, have been replaced by those absurd floating draperies which form the conventional attire of seraphs and sea nymphs all the world over. Never was there such an unhappy transformation. It is true that on the old cover of *Bentley's Magazine*—if we may trust the minute picture of it on the face of *Littell*—the little figures with baskets were clad, or unclad, in these same airy rags. But this fact does not reconcile me at all. I never knew *Bentley's* boys, but I have known *Harper's* children all my life, and I cannot bear to see them shivering month after month in such ridiculous, inadequate sashes. What sort of paper dolls would they have made

for well-bred little girls? And why should they have been deprived of their only garment to gratify a restless taste for change?

Well, it is useless to complain, for around us on every side people are fretting, and have fretted for generations over the unloved monotony of their surroundings. "It is not given to the world to be contented," says Goethe; and while life can never hurry on fast enough, or assume phases new enough to please the majority of mankind, a few dissatisfied souls will always cling perversely to the things which they have known, and feel more keenly every year that all the vaunted delights of novelty and progress are but a poor substitute for the finer charm of the familiar.

OLD WORLD PETS

WE have grown to be very narrow-minded, very exclusive, and hopelessly unimaginative in our choice of domestic pets. We love and cherish the dog, and we have a sentiment, less universal but far more disinterested, in favor of the beautiful and cold-hearted cat. We keep canaries in gilded cages—and there the matter practically ends. A few rabbits in a hutch—which are never petted—an occasional parrot feared by its master and hated by its master's friends; a little song-bird imprisoned now and then, and slowly dying of despair; these are instances, happily too infrequent to count very heavily in the scale. As a fact, many people value the dog and cat for their serviceable qualities alone; exiling the first to the kennel and the second to the kitchen, and liking both, as Miss Mitford confessed she liked children, "in their place"—meaning any place where she was not.

But when we turn back to the past we find, or think we find, a very different state of affairs; an almost endless variety of little wild creatures, tamed by luxury and love. The dog still holds his own, and we need look no further than the *Odyssey* to see, in the great hound Argus, the splendid sagacity, the unswerving loyalty, which centuries have not altered or impaired. I have always wished that Argus could have had Sir Walter Scott, rather than the crafty Odysseus for a master. There is also a pathetic dialogue in Theocritus between two old fishermen, who are so poor they may not even own a watchdog to guard their scanty spoils:

"All things, all, to them seemed superfluity, for Poverty was their sentinel. They had no neighbor by them, but ever against their narrow cabin gently floated up the sea."

Cats, too, were valued pets in former days, and probably found such easy domesticity more to their tastes than the burdensome honors of Egypt. In fact, when the Egyptian cat was not living in sanctified seclusion as the

friend and favorite of Pasht, she was apparently earning a laborious livelihood as a retriever, if we may trust a relic of Egyptian art in the British Museum, which shows us a magnificent animal carrying no less than three struggling wild fowls in her mouth and claws. But when Puss at last entered Greece and Rome, about the time of the Christian era, or perhaps a century or two earlier, it was simply as a plaything; and Mr. Pater in "Marius the Epicurean" describes very charmingly the snow-white beast brought by one of the guests to a Roman banquet, and purring its way among the wine-cups in response to caresses and coaxing words. Mrs. Graham R. Tomson, that most winning chronicler of the cat's vicissitudes and triumphs, has also told us in graceful verse the history of a Greek lover who loses his mistress because he dares not bring her from Egypt one of these coveted and mysterious creatures:

"A little lion, small and dainty sweet,
(For such there be !)
With sea-grey eyes and softly stepping feet,
She prayed of me.

For this, through lands Egyptian far away
She bade me pass;
But, in an evil hour, I said her nay—
And now, alas!
Far-traveled Nicias hath wooed and won
Arsinoë
With gifts of furry creatures white and dun
From over-sea."

In the Museum of Antiquities, at Bordeaux, there is a mutilated tomb of the Gallo-Roman period showing still the indistinct outlines of a young girl and her two pets; a cat clasped—very uncomfortably—in her arms, and, at her feet, a dignified cock, which appears to be pecking viciously at poor pussy's drooping tail.

The few allusions we find to the cat in later Greek poetry are hardly of a flattering nature. Theocritus makes the impatient Praxinoë, in his XVth Idyl, say to her handmaid, "Eunoë, bring the water and put it down in the middle of the room, lazy creature that you are! Cats like always to sleep soft,"—quite as if it were disgraceful in them to enjoy their ease. The same passage is interpreted somewhat differently, and in a still more uncharitable spirit by

Mr. Matthew Arnold: "Eunoë, pick up your work, and take care, lazy girl, how you leave it lying about again! The cats find it just the bed they like." At least we know, by this token, that Puss was an inmate—understood if not honored—of the Alexandrian household. There is also a dog; for Praxinoë, on going out, bids Phrygia, the nurse, "Take the child, and keep him amused; call in the dog, and shut the street door."

Perhaps it was the very diversity of pets that so often brought the cat into disgrace. She is not wont to tolerate divided affections, and the old primitive, savage instincts are very strong within her little breast. Consequently, there comes down to us out of the past a bitter wail of lamentation from foolish mortals who seem to have forgotten what a natural and wholesome thing it is for one creature to devour another. Agathias, a poet of the sixth century, has left us two mournful epigrams upon a favorite partridge ruthlessly done to death by a swift-footed and hungry cat:

"O my partridge! Poor exile from the rocks and the

heath, thy little willow house possesses thee no longer. No more dost thou rustle thy wings in the warmth of the rising sun. A cat has torn off thy head. I seized thy body and rescued it from his cruel jaws. Let the earth lie not too lightly on thee, lest thy enemy discover and drag thee from thy quiet grave."

The second epigram is quite as disconsolate and more vengeful in its tone:

"The domestic cat which has eaten my partridge flatters himself that he is still to live under my roof. No, dear bird, I will not leave thee unavenged, but on thy grave will I slay thy murderer. For thy shade, which roams tormented, cannot be quieted until I shall have done that which Pyrrhus did upon the grave of Achilles."

As if these direful threats were not enough, Damocharis, a disciple of Agathias, follows up the case with a third epigram in which he bewails the cruelty of the cat, and compares it with burning eloquence to one of Aktæon's hounds, which devoured its own master. "Here is a pretty pother about a partridge!" protests M. Champfleury, with the pardonable irritation of one who is wont to deal leniently with the shortcomings of his favorite animal, and who fails to sympathize with this excess of grief.

Pet partridges, indeed, are hardly in accord with modern taste, which is apt to regard them from the same simple point of view as did the cat of Agathias. Neither is the sparrow a popular plaything as in the days when Lesbia wept inconsolably for her dead bird, and Catullus sang in silvery strains to soothe her wounded heart. With what generous sympathy the lover laments and calls on the Loves and Graces, and on all the fair youths of Rome to lament with him this shocking and irreparable loss :

> " Dead my Lesbia's sparrow is,
> Sparrow that was all her bliss,
> Than her very eyes more dear."

How sombre is the picture he draws of the little petted creature that in life never strayed from the white bosom of its mistress, and that now must tread alone the gloomy pathway whence not even a bird may return. It is really heartrending to listen to his grief :

> " Out upon you and your power
> Which all fairest things devour,
> Orcus' gloomy shades! that e'er
> Ye took my Bird that was so fair.

Ah! the pity of it! Thou
Poor Bird! thy doing 'tis that now
My Loved One's eyes are swollen and red
With weeping for her darling dead."*

Almost as pathetic, and quite as musical as this melancholy dirge, are some of the epigrams to be found in that charming volume of translations from the Greek Anthology, which Lilla Cabot Perry has aptly entitled *From the Garden of Hellas*. Here we have graceful and tender verses dedicated to the memory of pet beasts and birds and insects, one of them, indeed, bewailing the hard fate of a locust and a cicada, which, beloved by the same mistress, sleep, equally lamented, side by side :

"Unto the locust, nightingale of fields,
And the cicada, who was wont to drowse
Through summer heat amid the oaken boughs,
This common tomb the maiden Myro builds;
And, like a child, weeps that she could not save
These twain, her cherished playthings, from the grave."

What can be prettier than such a requiem sung by Leonidas, and breathing in every line a

*Translated by Sir Theodore Martin.

sentiment half natural, half assumed! We look back into the past, and smile, but with no unfeeling mirth, to see the tiny tomb with its cold and silent inmates whose shrill, amorous music is hushed for evermore. Nor were they alone in their sad distinction, for on every side other deserving insects were as decorously interred, and as tunefully bewailed. The poet who mourned for the "maiden Myro's" playthings, was fain to sing with the same ready sympathy and the same charming grace the praises of Philænida's pet locust, loved and lost:

"What if small, O passer-by,
Be this stone! 'tis mine you see.
What if it you scarce descry!
Philænida gave it me.

"Praise her that she held me dear,
Me, her little locust, singing,
Whether in the stubble here
Or amid the bushes winging.

"Two long years she loved me well,
Loved my drowsy lullaby;
Me e'en dead did not repel,
As these verses testify."

Another epigram by Mnasalcas bewails a

similar loss, and inclines us slowly to the painful conviction that all Greece must have been in mourning for these short-lived insects, which, like poor Hinda's tantalizing gazelles, appear to have made a point of dying just when they had grown most dear. It is a positive relief to find Meleager dedicating his verses to a pet cicada which is still alive and enjoying its master's tender care :

"Cicada, you who chase away desire,
Cicada, who beguile our sleepless hours,
You song-winged muse of meadows and of flowers,
Who are the natural mimic of the lyre,
Chirp a familiar melody and sweet,
My weight of sleepless care to drive away;
Your love-beguiling tune to me now play,
Striking your prattling wings with your dear feet.
In early morning I'll bring gifts to you
Of garlic ever fresh and drops of dew."

There is an exquisite description in the first Idyl of Theocritus of a deep bowl of ivy wood, the gift of a goatherd to the singer Thyrsis, on which is carved, among other pastoral scenes, a boy weaving a locust cage while he guards the vineyard from the foxes. Just such a

dainty toy he weaves as may well have been the habitation of those luxurious and thrice-favored insects, the petted captives of Myro and fair Philænida:

"Now divided but a little space from the sea-worn old man is a vineyard laden well with fire-red clusters, and on the rough wall a little lad watches the vineyard, sitting there. Round him two she-foxes are skulking, and one goes along the vine rows to devour the ripe grapes, and the other brings all her cunning to bear against the scrip, and vows she will never leave the lad till she strand him bare and breakfastless. But the boy is plaiting a pretty locust cage with stalks of asphodel, and fitting it with reeds; and less care of his scrip has he, or of the vines, than delight in his plaiting."*

Kids and lambs are pastoral playthings which the rustic lovers of Theocritus delight in offering to their fair ones; and in the Vth Idyl Comatus complains to Lacon that he has given a bird to Alcippe and won from her no kiss in return. Whereupon Lacon, in the true spirit of amorous boastfulness, protests that he gave but a shepherd's pipe to his maiden, and sweetly she kissed and caressed him. A great hound,

* Translation of Mr. Andrew Lang.

strong enough to strangle wolves, a mixing bowl wrought by the hand of Praxiteles, a vessel of cypress wood, a soft fleece from the newly shorn ewe, and a brooding ring-dove are among the presents offered by these shepherds in generous rivalry at the shrine of love.

But by far the most winning pet whose memory has come down to us enshrined in Greek verse is the little wildwood hare, cherished by a young girl, and sung by the poet Meleager. Gentler and more affectionate than Cowper's sturdy favorites, it shares with them a modest fame, a quiet corner in the long gallery of prized and honored beasts. To those who have loved Tiney and Puss from childhood, it is a pleasure to see by their side this shrinking stranger, this poor little overfed, much-caressed darling whose race was quickly run:

"From my mother's teats they tore me,
Little long-eared hare, and bore me,
The swift-footed, from her breast.
Phanium, soft-handed, fed me
On spring flowers, and nourished me,
Fondling in her lap to rest.

"No more for my mother sighing,
Feasting daintily, then dying;
I by too much food was slain.
And she buried me with weeping
Near her house, that she, while sleeping,
Me in dreams might see again."*

On what smooth Elysian sward does this little Grecian hare sport with his English cousins? Fed, perchance, by Persephone's white hand, they gambol for evermore by the deep waters of Oblivion; and the gray ghosts, flitting by, smile with sad eyes upon the nimble creatures who, shadows in shadowland, yet bear in every limb rich memories of woodland glade, and of the dear, life-giving soil of earth.

* Translation of Lilla Cabot Perry.

BATTLE OF THE BABIES

A WARFARE has been raging in our midst, the echoes of which have hardly yet died sullenly away upon either side of the Atlantic. It has been a bloodless and un-Homeric strife, not without humorous side-issues, as when Pistol and Bardolph and Fluellen come to cheer our anxious spirits at the siege of Harfleur. Its first guns were heard in New York, where a modest periodical, devoted to the training of parents, opened fire upon those time-honored nursery legends which are presumably dear to the hearts of all rightly constituted babies. The leader of this gallant foray protested vehemently against all fairy tales of a mournful or sanguinary cast, and her denunciation necessarily included many stories which have for generations been familiar to every little child. She rejected *Red Riding Hood*, because her own infancy was haunted

and embittered by the evil behavior of the wolf; she would have none of *Bluebeard*, because he was a wholesale fiend and murderer; she would not even allow the pretty *Babes in the Wood*, because they tell a tale of cold-hearted cruelty and of helpless suffering; while all fierce narratives of giants and ogres and magicians were to be banished ruthlessly from our shelves. Verily, reading will be but gentle sport in the virtuous days to come.

Now it chanced that this serious protest against nursery lore fell into the hands of Mr. Andrew Lang, the most light-hearted and conservative of critics, and partial withal to tales of bloodshed and adventure. How could it be otherwise with one reared on the bleak border land, and familiar from infancy with the wild border legends that Sir Walter knew and loved; with stories of Thomas the Rhymer, and the plundering Hardens, and the black witches of Loch Awe! It was natural that with the echoes of the old savage strife ringing in his ears, and with the memories of the dour Scottish bogies and warlocks lingering in his

heart, Mr. Lang could but indifferently sympathize with those anxious parents who think the stories of Bluebeard and Jack the Giant Killer too shocking for infant ears to hear. Our grandmothers, he declared, were not ferocious old ladies, yet they told us these tales, and many more which we were none the worse for hearing. "Not to know them is to be sadly ignorant, and to miss that which all people have relished in all ages." Moreover, it is apparent to him, and indeed to most of us, that we cannot take even our earliest steps in the world of literature, or in the shaded paths of knowledge, without encountering suffering and sin in some shape; while, as we advance a little further, these grisly forms fly ever on before. "Cain," remarks Mr. Lang, "killed Abel. The flood drowned quite a number of persons. David was not a stainless knight, and Henry VIII. was nearly as bad as Bluebeard. Several deserving gentlemen were killed at Marathon. Front de Bœuf came to an end shocking to sensibility, and to Mr. Ruskin." The *Arabian Nights*, *Pilgrim's Prog-*

ress, *Paul and Virginia*—all the dear old nursery favorites must, under the new dispensation, be banished from our midst; and the rising generation of prigs must be nourished exclusively on *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, and other carefully selected specimens of milk-and-water diet.

The prospect hardly seems inviting; but as the English guns rattled merrily away in behalf of English tradition, they were promptly met by an answering roar from this side of the water. A Boston paper rushed gallantly to the defense of the New York periodical, and gave Mr. Lang—to use a pet expression of his own—"his kail through the reek." American children, it appears, are too sensitively organized to endure the unredeemed ferocity of the old fairy stories. The British child may sleep soundly in its little cot after hearing about the Babes in the Wood; the American infant is prematurely saddened by such unmerited misfortune. "If a consensus of American mothers could be taken," says the Boston writer, "our English critic might be infinitely dis-

gusted to know in how many nurseries these cruel tales must be changed, or not told at all to the children of less savage generations. No mother nowadays tells them in their unmitigated brutality."

Is this true, I wonder, and are our supersenitive babies reared perforce on the optimistic version of Red Riding Hood, where the wolf is cut open by the woodman, and the little girl and her grandmother jump out, safe and sound? Their New England champion speaks of the "intolerable misery"—a very strong phrase—which he suffered in infancy from having his nurse tell him of the Babes in the Wood; while the Scriptural stories were apparently every whit as unbearable and heart-breaking. "I remember," he says, "two children, strong, brave man and woman now, who in righteous rage plucked the Slaughter of the Innocents out from the family Bible." This was a radical measure, to say the least, and if many little boys and girls started in to expurgate the Scriptures in such liberal fashion, the holy book would soon present a sadly mutilat-

ed appearance. Moreover, it seems to me that such an anecdote, narrated with admirable assurance, reveals very painfully the lack of a fine and delicate spirituality in the religious training of children; of that grace and distinction which are akin to saintship, and are united so charmingly in those to whom truth has been inseparably associated with beauty. There is a painting by Ghirlandaio hanging over the altar in the chapel of the Foundling Asylum in Florence. It represents the Adoration of the Magi, and kneeling by the side of the Wise Men is a little group of the Holy Innocents, their tiny garments stained with blood, their hands clasped in prayer; while the Divine Child turns from his mother's embraces, and from the kings' rich gifts to greet the little companions who have yielded up their spotless lives for him. Now, surely those lean, brown Florentine orphans, who have always before their eyes this beautiful and tender picture, absorb through it alone a religious sentiment unfelt by American children who are familiar only with the ugly and inane prints of Ameri-

can Sunday-schools, in which I have known the line, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," to be illustrated by a man with a magnifying-glass in his hand. Possibly our Sunday-school scholars, being more accurately instructed as to dates, could inform the little Florentines that the Innocents were not slaughtered until after the Magi had returned to the East. But no child who had looked day after day upon Ghirlandaio's lovely picture—more appealing in its pathos than Holman Hunt's brilliant and jocund Triumph of the Innocents—could desire to pluck "in righteous rage" that chapter from the Bible. He would have at least some dim and imperfect conception of the spiritual meaning, the spiritual joy, which underlie the pain and horror of the story.

This reflection will help us in some measure to come to a decision, when we return to the vexed problem of nursery tales and legends. I believe it is as well to cultivate a child's emotions as to cultivate his manners or his morals, and the first step in such a direction is

necessarily taken through the stories told him in infancy. If a consensus of mothers would reject the good old fairy tales "in their unmitigated brutality," a consensus of men of letters would render a different verdict; and such men, who have been children in their time, and who look back with wistful delight upon the familiar figures who were their earliest friends, are entitled to an opinion in the case. How admirable was the "righteous rage" of Charles Lamb, when he wanted to buy some of these same brutal fairy stories for the little Coleridges, and could find nothing but the correct and commonplace literature which his whole soul abhorred! "Mrs. Barbauld's and Mrs. Trimmer's nonsense lay in piles about," he wrote indignantly to papa Coleridge, "and have banished all the old classics of the nursery. Knowledge, insignificant and vapid as Mrs. Barbauld's books convey, must, it seems, come to a child in the shape of knowledge; and his empty noddle must be turned with conceit of his own powers when he has learnt that a horse is an animal, and that Billy is

better than a horse, and such like; instead of that beautiful interest in wild tales which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child."

Just such a wild tale, fantastic rather than beautiful, haunted Châteaubriand all his life—the story of Count Combourg's wooden leg, which, three hundred years after its owner's death, was seen at night walking solemnly down the steep turret stairs, attended by a huge black cat. Not at all the kind of story we would select to tell a child nowadays. By no means! Even the little Châteaubriand heard it from peasant lips. Yet in after years, when he had fought the battle of life, and fought it with success; when he had grown gray, and illustrious, and disillusioned, and melancholy, what should come back to his mind, with its old pleasant flavor of terror and mystery, but the vision of Count Combourg's wooden leg taking its midnight constitutional, with the black cat stepping softly on before? So he notes it gravely down in his Memoirs, just as Scott notes in his diary the

pranks of Whippity Stourie, the Scotch bogie that steals at night into open nursery windows; and just as Heine, in gay, sunlit Paris, recalls with joy the dark, sweet, sombre tales of the witch and fairy haunted forests of Germany.

These are impressions worth recording, and they are only a few out of many which may be gathered from similar sources. That which is vital in literature or tradition, which has survived the obscurity and wreckage of the past, whether as legend, or ballad, or mere nursery rhyme, has survived in right of some intrinsic merit of its own, and will not be snuffed out of existence by any of our precautionary or hygienic measures. We could not banish Bluebeard if we would. He is as immortal as Hamlet, and when hundreds of years shall have passed over this uncomfortably enlightened world, the children of the future—who, thank Heaven, can never, with all our efforts, be born grown up—will still tremble at the blood-stained key, and rejoice when the big brave brothers come galloping up the road. We

could not even rid ourselves of Mother Goose, though she, too, has her mortal enemies, who protest periodically against her cruelty and grossness. We could not drive Punch and Judy from our midst, though Mr. Punch's derelictions have been the subject of much serious and adverse criticism. It is not by such barbarous rhymes or by such brutal spectacles that we teach a child the lessons of integrity and gentleness, explain our nursery moralists, and probably they are correct. Moreover, Bluebeard does not teach a lesson of conjugal felicity, and Cinderella is full of the world's vanities, and Puss in Boots is one long record of triumphant effrontery and deception. An honest and self-respecting lad would have explained to the king that he was not the Marquis of Carabas at all; that he had no desire to profit by his cat's ingenious falsehoods, and no weak ambition to connect himself with the aristocracy. Such a hero would be a credit to our modern schoolrooms, and lift a load of care from the shoulders of our modern critics. Only the children would have none of him,

but would turn wistfully back to those brave old tales which are their inheritance from a splendid past, and of which no hand shall rob them.

THE NOVEL OF INCIDENT

A GREAT deal of generous scorn has been expended of late years upon those old-fashioned novels in which the characters were given plenty to do, and did it with a supreme energy and passion, only possible, perhaps, within the enchanted precincts of fiction. Such stories, we are told, are false to life, which is monotonous, uneventful, and made up day by day of minute and tedious detail, small pleasures which are hardly recognizable as such, and grim vexations which can never be persuaded to assume noble or heroic proportions. The truthful representation of life being the only worthy object of a novelist's skill, it follows that his tale should be destitute of any incidents save those with which we are all familiar in the narrow routine of existence. We should be able to verify them by experience—

to prove them, as children prove their examples at school.

To meet these current severities of realism, the advocates of a livelier fiction unite in saying a great many sarcastic and amusing things about the deadly dulness of their opponents; about the hero and heroine who, in the course of three volumes, "agree not to become engaged," and about the lady's subtle reasons for dropping her handkerchief, or passing a cruet at table. It may be hard work to build up a novel out of nothing, they admit, but we can only echo Dr. Johnson's words, and wish it were impossible. Where is the gain in this perpetual unfolding of the obvious? What is the advantage of wasting genuine ability upon a task the difficulties of which constitute its sole claim to distinction?

But *is* the so-called novel of character more difficult to write than the novel of romance? This question can be answered satisfactorily only by an author who has done both kinds of work sufficiently well to make his opinion valuable; and, so far, no such versatile genius has

appeared in the field of letters. If we may judge by results, we should say that artistic labor is as rare in one school of fiction as in the other, and apparently as far out of the reach of the ordinary champion in the arena. It is easy enough to be analytic; but it is extremely hard to be luminous, or interpretative, or to know when analysis counts. It is easy to stuff a book full of incidents; but it is hard to make those incidents living pages in literature. After De Foe had led the way with *Robinson Crusoe*, a whole army of imitators wrote similar tales of adventure; but Robinson Crusoe is to-day the only shipwrecked mariner whose every action awakens interest and delight. Mr. Stevenson in *The Black Arrow*, and Mr. Rider Haggard in *Nada the Lily*, have given us stories rich in horrors which do not horrify, and excitements which do not excite. Mr. Stevenson's tale is one bewildering succession of murders, plots, hairbreadth escapes, bloody skirmishes, and perils by field and flood; yet a gentle indifference as to which side wins is the only distinct sentiment with which we follow the wind-

ings of his narrative. Sir Daniel is a perjured villain; but it is with no stern sense of just retribution that we see him fall under the fatal arrow. Master Dick is a stout young soldier; but where is the breathless attention with which we pursue every step of another young soldier, equally brave and quick-witted, Quentin Durward of Glen-houlakin? Even Joan in her doublet and hose—a device dear to the heart of the romanticist—is almost as uninteresting as Joan in her petticoats; though perhaps the most striking scene in the book is that in which Dick endeavors with hearty good will to administer a little well-deserved chastisement to the supposed boy, and finds himself withheld by some subtle apprehension of a secret he is far from suspecting. To compare *The Black Arrow* with *Ivanhoe* or *Quentin Durward* is manifestly unjust. It is no shame to any man to be surpassed by Scott. But when we remember the admirable and satisfying events in *Treasure Island*, or the well-sustained interest of *Kidnapped*, it seems incredible that Mr. Stevenson, of all novelists,

should have succeeded in telling a lifeless story of adventure.

As for *Nada the Lily*, its incidents are too monotonously painful to do more than distress the reader. I am inclined to think that a greater number of people die in the course of this tale than in all the rest of English fiction, exclusive of Mr. Haggard's other novels. They die singly, in pairs, in groups, in armies, in whole tribes. They die in battle, by fire, by torture, by starvation, at the hands of pitiless slaughterers, and under the fangs of ghost wolves. They die for every imaginable cause, and under every conceivable circumstance. To keep the death-rate of such a story would be like keeping the death-rate of the Deluge. There is the same comprehensive and all-embracing destruction. This may be true to Zulu history—in fact, Mr. Haggard tells us as much in his preface to "Nada," and few people are in a position to dispute the point; but it is radically false to art, and impairs the natural vigor of the tale. While one tragedy may be sombre and impressive, a dozen are apt to be fa-

tiguing, and half a hundred border closely on the burlesque. Chaka, "a Napoleon and Tiberius in one," reminds the irreverent reader irresistibly of the Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, who is all the time saying, "Off with his head!" and ordering everybody to execution; the only difference being that the Queen's victims turn up blandly in the next chapter, and Chaka's never reappear. He it is who slays Unandi his mother, Baleka his wife, all his children save one, all his enemies, and most of his friends. Then his turn comes—and none too soon—to be murdered, and Dingaan his brother, "who had the fierce heart of Chaka without its greatness," sets to work systematically to kill everybody who chances to be left. By the time he, too, is flung over the cliff to die, Mopo and Umslopogaas alone survive; the first because he has to tell the tale—after which he promptly expires—and the second because he has already been slain in battle during the progress of another story. The most curious thing about this wholesale devastation is that Mr. Haggard apparently deplores it as much as the rest of us. "It

would have been desirable to introduce some gayer and more happy incidents," he admits in his preface, "*but it has not been possible.*" Why has it not been possible, we wonder? It is the privilege of a novelist to select or discard material according to his good judgment. He is not writing a history; he is telling a story. He is not chronicling events; he is weaving a romance. He is an artist, not a recorder; and in the choice as well as in the use of material lies the test of unblemished art.

What, then, is the vital charm which makes the novel of incident true literature—the charm possessed by Dumas, and Fielding, and Sir Walter Scott? Mr. Birrell, who is always in love with plain definitions, says that if a book be full of "inns, atmosphere, and motion," then it is a good book, and he asks no more. Mr. Lang, who shares this hearty sympathy for action, acknowledges that the best results are often obtained by the simplest machinery. "Dumas," he declares, "requires no more than a room in an inn, where people meet in riding-cloaks, to move the heart with the last degree

of pity and terror." Scott handles incident with the matchless skill of a great story-teller. He shows the same instinctive art in his situations that a great painter like Rembrandt shows in his grouping. Every figure falls so inevitably into his right place that it is impossible for us to imagine him in any other. Henry Bertram's return to Ellengowan is one of the most artistic and charming scenes in fiction, though it is described with such careless simplicity. Perplexed and fascinated by the childish memories tugging at his heartstrings, the young laird gazes at his ancestral home, and listens with rapture—which we share—to the fragment of a long-forgotten yet familiar song:

> "Are these the Links of Forth," she said,
> "Or are they the crooks of Dee,
> Or the bonnie woods of Warroch-head
> That I so fain would see?"

There may be people who are in no way moved by this home-coming, and who feel no joy when Queen Mary's boat glides over the dark waters of Lochleven, and no horror at that ill-omened churchyard gossip which ushers in the

dreadful wedding of Lammermoor. I do not envy them their composure; but what of King Louis's visit to the Duke of Burgundy in *Quentin Durward*, a situation so tense with passion that the least imaginative reader may well tremble at the possibilities of every minute? What of the sacking of Liege, the siege of Front de Bœuf's castle, the trial of Rebecca, the battle of Bothwell Bridge? He who could carry a chilly indifference through such narratives as these would not care if Shylock gained his suit, or King Harry lost the field of Agincourt. I doubt if he would really care whether Hector or Achilles won the fight.

The casual incidents of life, the trivial possibilities of every day, are treated by Dickens with extraordinary humor and skill; witness David Copperfield's journey to Dover, and Oliver Twist's first introduction to Fagin's den. But his great situations are apt to be theatrical rather than dramatic. It is not often that he reaches the sombre strength and passion of that memorable scene where the convict reveals to Pip the secret of his mysterious wealth.

I do not know whether a great many people read Bulwer's novels nowadays. They belong to a past generation, which perhaps was luckier than the present. But I do know that the rescue of Glaucus from the arena was an epoch in my childhood, and the cry of joy that rings from Nydia's lips rang in my heart for years. I have an inexpressible tenderness now for *The Last Days of Pompeii*, because of the passionate suspense with which I read it when I was a little girl, and the supreme gasp of relief with which I hailed the arrival of Sallust and Calenus, while the lion crouches trembling in his cage. It is not easy to criticise a book linked with such vivid memories, and perhaps it is the association with early pleasures which gilds for many of us the beguiling pages of romance. "We are all homesick, in the dark days and black towns, for the land of blue skies and brave adventures in forests, and in lonely inns, on the battle-field, in the prison, on the desert isle." It is useless, and worse than useless, to dispute over the respective schools of fiction, instead of gladly enjoying

that which we like best; and there are different kinds of enjoyment for different kinds of work. For my part, the good novel of character is the novel I can always pick up; but the good novel of incident is the novel I can never lay down.

GHOSTS

GHOSTS enjoy a curious popularity in England to-day. Years ago they fell into unmerited disfavor; and for a century and a half they battled with scant success against that arrogant wave of reason and common sense which chilled the fair fields of poetry, swept romance from the land, and left the sombre glades of superstition tenantless and bare of every horror. From time to time, indeed, the exiled ghosts, like the exiled gods of Olympos, strove to regain their lost ascendency; but there was something pitifully vulgar about their trivial triumphs. Apparitions whose modest mission was to sell a volume of dull sermons upon death, or to stir up a clamorous mob in Cock Lane, could scarcely aspire to a dignified position in the spirit world. Even their local coloring, though it lent them a transient estimation with the public, told against them in the

end; for the city streets, and that highly vaunted bulwark of the nation, the great respectable middle class, are not harmonious accessories of the supernatural. As for the educated people, who now reverently await each new development of the impossible, theirs was a different attitude one hundred years ago. Men who read Pope and Swift and Addison, whose heads were clear, whose hearts were cold, whose faith was limited, and whose digestions defied high living, could ill attune their minds to the "dark sweet horror" of mediæval ghost lore. "The Deevil never appears to a man that 's no frichtened aforehaun out o' his seven senses," says the Ettrick Shepherd; and *he* lived in Scotland, where skepticism failed to attain the easy supercilious composure of her English sister; in Scotland, where the exiled fairies and witches shared with the exiled Stuarts the just affections of a loyal race.

There is little doubt that Sir Walter was secretly enamored of the superstitions which he affected to disregard, and which the stupid prejudices of his day would not permit him to

enjoy in peace. What can be more pathetic than the contrast between his robust denials and his quick, half-smothered sympathy for all eerie things? How well he tells the tale of the apparition seen by Lord Londonderry, — the naked child who emerged from the dying embers of the grate, and who, like Faust's terrible hound, increased in size as he approached the curtained and recessed bed. Lord Londonderry, Scott explains somewhat peevishly, was the only man he knew to whom a veritable ghost had ever appeared, and he is burdened with the conviction that it may be his duty to offer some explanation of the mystery. As for the supernatural element in his novels, it is almost always a failure; not from lack of imagination or of vivid power, for the mingled horror and humor and pathos of "Wandering Willie's Tale" have never been surpassed, but because the atmosphere in which he lived was unfavorable to the full development of such lawless fancies. The White Lady of Avenel is one of the tamest spirits in all fiction. Good Protestants may have rejoiced in the sound-

ness of her religious principles; but it is not the place of apparitions to be progressive and enlightened. If they know what is best for them, they will cling to the old order, for when it passes away it takes their strongest constituency along with it. I sometimes fear that modern ghosts are being lured to their destruction by the new semi-scientific methods of research, which beguile them with a show of respect and a little worthless notoriety, but which in the end will rob them of their heritage, — that shadowy power which has come down from the dim past to be bartered away at last, like Esau's birthright, for a mess of pottage.

If proof were wanted of the low estate to which the English eighteenth-century ghosts had been reduced, it might be found in the spasmodic efforts made to win them a place in literature. That Walpole, of all men in Christendom, should have attempted this, is one of those pleasant ironies which cheer the humorist's path. That educated adults should have read *The Castle of Otranto* with little thrills of horror helps us to understand what otherwise

would be a hopeless mystery, — the amazing popularity of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels. We are required to believe, on excellent authority, that when the newly printed *Mysteries of Udolpho* appeared in quiet country homes, it was literally torn to pieces, so that each eager member of the household could seize a portion without unnecessary delay. Thousands of young women lived, like Catherine Morland, in a delightful atmosphere of gloom and excitation, whispering by candle-light, with bated breath, of dungeons and black-robed messengers of evil, and awful secrets forever on the tantalizing verge of revelation. Yet Mrs. Radcliffe never got beyond the bare machinery, the stage-work and scaffolding of mystery. Her novels are as much akin to the terrible tales of Germany as are the frolicsome apes and witches of Mr. Irving's *Faust* to Goethe's ministers of sin. What is there in all the endless pages of *Udolpho* to compare with that single incident in the story of *Pretty Annerl*, when the child goes with her grandmother to the house of the headsman, and the great hidden sword, by which she

is destined to die, is heard stirring uneasily in the cupboard? Annerl, believing it to be an animal, is frightened, and begins to cry; but the headsman knows for what drink the sword is thirsting, and begs the grandmother to allow him to cut the little one's neck very gently, so that a few drops of blood may be drawn, and the weapon be appeased. To this excellent advice the old woman refuses to listen; and the sword bides its time until the inevitable hour when Annerl, grown into unhappy womanhood, is brought upon the scaffold to die.

In this simple tale there is that element of horror which is the birthright of German fiction. Truly has Heine observed that his is the motherland of superstition, the favored home of all that is fanciful, and terrifying, and unreal. "You French," he writes, — before the days of Maupassant, be it remembered, — "must see for yourselves that the horrible is not your province, and that France is no fit home for ghosts of any kind. When you call upon them, we must needs smile. Yes, we Germans, who remain serious at your most pleasant witticisms,

we laugh all the more heartily at your ghost stories. For your ghosts are always Frenchmen, and French ghosts, — what a contradiction in terms! In the word 'ghost' there is such a suggestion of loneliness, surliness, and silence. In the word 'French' there is so much that is social, witty, and prattling. How could a Frenchman be a ghost, or how could ghosts exist in Paris?"

They have existed, however, in England, and even in London, for a good many centuries; and bid fair to exist for as many more, if they are not decoyed out of their seclusion by unwise notoriety and attentions. In China and Japan, Mr. Lang assures us, ghosts do not live a "hole-and-corner" life; but come boldly forward, and play their parts in the business and pleasures of society. This is the example which English apparitions are being urged daily to follow, and this is the behavior which their modesty and native conservatism have hitherto conspired to forbid. It is easy for Japanese ghosts to assume definite duties in the world. They know precisely what is expected of them. The "well-

and-water" spectre, an inert shapeless thing, all slimy and limp and white, haunts the drinking-fountains, and peers malignly from the cold unruffled depth. The "chink-and-crevice" bogie takes upon itself the congenial task of dropping on you from some dark corner of the ceiling, and strangling you in its serpent-like embraces. The pale, shadowy larva that rises, uncoiling like a mist-wreath, from the grave, never deserts the burying-place which is its congenial home. The bestial vampire, glutting itself with blood, crawls forever amid the desecrated tombs. These unpleasant creatures, and many more as bad, have had their especial privileges and their especial lines of labor marked out for generations, and they adhere steadfastly to their posts. But the trouble with English phantoms seems to be that they have not yet learned what they are good for, and their miserable vagueness of purpose is the most disappointing and disheartening thing about them. "The modern ghost," complains an irascible critic, "appears, nobody knows why. He has no message to deliver, no secret crime to reveal, no appoint

ment to keep, no treasure to disclose, no commissions to be executed, and, as an almost invariable rule, he does not speak, even if you speak to him."

Nevertheless, in this utilitarian age, his popularity is ever on the increase, and there are plenty of enthusiasts who think they will yet overcome his silence, and persuade him to assume a more rational line of conduct. He has friends in every class of life who ardently desire his confidence, and who, in brief moments of self-deception, are prepared to think they have received it. Far back, in 1584, that devout writer, Reginald Scott, author of the *Discovery of Witchcraft*, ventured to ask with somewhat premature triumph, "Where are the soules that swarmed in times past? Where are the spirits? Who heareth their noises? Who seeith their visions?" To which last questions Mr. Lang makes prompt answer for the nineteenth century: "Protestant clergymen, officers in the army, ladies, land-agents, solicitors, representatives of all classes except the Haunted House Committee of the Psychical Society." Fashions

have changed since people sneered a little even at Dr. Johnson because he stoutly persisted in fearing ghosts, if not in believing in them all his life. We are beginning now to remember everything that has been said, and well said, in favor of such fear. We are beginning to acknowledge that what universal reason proudly denies, universal apprehension tremblingly admits. We read with pleasure Shelley's modest words, written, it is true, after an evening profitably spent in listening to some of the most ghostly tales that "Monk" Lewis and Lord Byron could relate. "I do not think," muses the poet in the solitude of his bed-chamber, "that all the persons who profess to discredit these visitations really discredit them; or, if they do in daylight, are not admonished by the approach of loneliness and midnight to think more respectfully of the world of shadows."

This is candor itself, and Shelley was singularly fitted for such "melancholy, pleasurable fear," because he possessed in an unusual degree that extreme sensitiveness to surroundings which is a proper attribute both of the poet

and the ghost-seer. "Certain dark gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck," says Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson; and Burns condenses the same thought into that incomparable line, "ghaist-alluring edifices." No one can read the fragment of Shelley's *Speculations on Metaphysics*, in which he describes the subtle horror which thrilled him at sight of an ordinary and well-remembered landscape, without recognizing the close connection which existed for him between the seen and the unseen, between the supernatural element and its supremely commonplace setting. It was while walking with a friend near Oxford that he suddenly came upon a bit of country familiar to him in dreams, and associated with half painful, half terrible emotions.

"The view consisted of a windmill, standing in one among many plashy meadows, inclosed with stone walls; the irregular and broken ground between the wall and the road on which we stood; a long low hill behind the windmill, and a gray covering of uniform cloud spread over the evening sky. It was

that season when the last leaf has just fallen from the scant and stunted ash. The scene surely was a common scene; the season and the hour little calculated to kindle lawless thought. It was a tame, uninteresting assemblage of objects, such as would drive the imagination for refuge in serious and sober talk to the evening fireside, and the dessert of winter fruits and wine."

Yet this quiet English landscape, with its dull monotony of tint and outline, awoke within the poet's breast such bewildering sensations of terror that he lacked the courage to describe them, and Mary Shelley affirms that the mere recollection of those fearful moments agitated him beyond control. The most curious circumstance in the case is the presence of the windmill, that homely and friendly little building, which, for some inexplicable cause, carries with it, in every land, an unwarranted flavor of ghostliness. Heine was quick to recognize its uncanny attributes, and shivered when he saw the slow arms turning softly in the twilight, or standing, stiff and spectral, under a starlit sky. Sir Walter Scott, who was less sensitive than most men to impressions of this order, confesses

in his journal that from childhood he had secretly feared a mill, even those cheerful, noisy mills where the great wheels revolve briskly to the sound of rushing water; and that the sight of one at sunset filled him with uneasiness and gloom. In the north, mills are not only the chosen haunt of witches, but have familiars of their own, the mill-goblins who hold the wheels still in the water with their strong bony hands; and Asbjörnsen, in *Round the Yule-Log*, tells us that he tried vainly to induce a peasant lad to remain with him in one overnight. "My mother has often told me that there are evil spirits dwelling in these mills," said the prudent boy, and declined all risk of their companionship.

In truth, the terrible ghosts and demons of the north are not helpless, harmless, speechless, purposeless creatures, to be courted and coddled like English drawing-room apparitions. Their hands can strangle and slay; their strength is greater than the strength of men; their wills are evil always; their malignity can never be appeased. When overcome, they are to be dreaded still; for, long ago, Grettir the Strong

slew the Ghost of Glam, slew it manfully by the seashore, and hoped that peace had come into his troubled life. But when the moonlight shone upon the sands, and Grettir looked on the creature he had killed, he beheld for the first time the horror of its awful eyes. Then fear seized him who before had never feared, and from that hour he dared not be alone at night, but trembled like a woman in the darkness, beseeching companionship and comfort. Even the Scottish spectres are stronger and more malign than their English cousins; and Mr. Lang, in his *Angling Sketches*, tells us a ghastly tale of three Highland shepherds, who sat talking of their sweethearts in a lonely sheiling, on Loch Awe, and wishing, each one, for the presence of the girl he loved. Suddenly the three young women entered, smiling, and two of the lads received them joyously, and went with them into dark corners of the hut. But the third, fearing he knew not what, sat quietly by the fire, and played on a little Jew's-harp. "Harping is good, if no ill follows it," said the semblance of his sweetheart angrily;

to which the boy made no reply, but kept on playing steadfastly. In a few minutes he saw, trickling from one dim corner of the sheiling, a tiny stream of blood, and presently a second stream from the other corner joined it sluggishly in the fire-light. Then he arose, still playing, and fled into the night, leaving his dead comrades in the embraces of the vampires who had worn so falsely the masks of familiarity and love.

These are not spirits to be tamed by psychical research, and invited to make themselves at home in good society. There is not even a great deal gained by calling them, in the scientific language of the day, "phantasmogenetic agencies," as if that elucidated the mystery or made them comfortable companions. It were better, perhaps, to remember Porphyry's warning that all ghosts and demons are by nature deceitful and fond of travesty. It were wiser to give heed to old Richard Burton, who knew more about such matters than a wilderness of scientists, and who assures us plainly that the most illiterate devil is an unsafe antagonist

for the most learned man. It were true sagacity to fear the powers of evil rather than to patronize them. Faust is supercilious enough when Mephistopheles first comes upon the scene, but he learns a little later on the ruthlessness of the spirit he has invoked. "Ghosts are rare, but devils are plenty," says Cotton Mather, and in tracking the first we may stumble unaware upon the second. At its best, the companionship of spectres makes but a dubious surrounding in which to pass our days, even though we escape the stake and fagots which the stern conservatism of our forefathers provided as a barrier for such intercourse. The gift of second-sight was ever an unenviable as well as an unhallowed possession, and the man born to such a fatal heritage had scant cause to rejoice in his accomplishment. "It is certaine," says Kirk truly, "he sie more gloomy and fearfull things than he do gladsome;" and the ever-present possibility of being burned as a warlock was hardly calculated to enhance the cheerfulness of his visions. Cassandra's powers, it will be remembered, were neither soothing to herself nor serviceable to

her neighbors. Theoclymenus had probably but scant appetite for the Odyssean banquet after he had seen the shrouds woven slowly around the doomed wooers. The old woman in Mr. Frazer's narrative who beheld a sailor boy "walking in his winding-sheet, sewed up from top to toe," besought in vain that the lad might be left on shore. Her words were unheeded, and the little fellow sailed away to his death; another instance of the futility of portents. The Scottish minister who, in 1811, unwillingly confessed to having seen the corpse candles rise at night from the graves of two children and proceed to the house of their father, who died the following day, had especial cause for vexation at his own inopportune testimony. For years he had preached against the wicked credulity and superstitions of his parishioners, and it seemed hard that he, of all men, should have been selected by the ironical humor of the spirit world to be a witness of these uncanny and unwelcome manifestations.

Search where we will, read what we may, we find little to warrant us in the belief that ghosts

will ever develop into reasonable creatures, or that we shall ever succeed in piercing the mystery of their perverse and wavering natures. They do not change with the changing centuries. Our attitude towards them varies with every new current of thought, every successive tide of susceptibility or skepticism; but they are the same freakish and elusive phantoms that they were in the days of Thessalian magic or of Salem witchcraft. Mr. Lang, sifting the subject through the five hundred and fifty-seven pages of *Cock Lane and Common-Sense*, turning on it every light, and patiently exploring every avenue of approach, comes at last to the conclusion that we know nothing at all about it, and are not in the least likely to find anything out. How one, reared in wholesome fear of the supernatural, and looking back upon a childhood of "variegated and intense misery, recurring with especial vigor at bed-time," should have the hardihood to write so flippantly of ghosts and ghost-seers passes my comprehension. "We do not know the laws of that country," says Charles Lamb, and he who has

ever trembled trembles still when loneliness and midnight bring him face to face with "the terror that walketh in darkness." Stories may be amusing, and apparitions may lack every quality which a self-respecting and fear-inspiring ghost should possess. "Many of them," says Mr. Lang, reproachfully, "have a perfect craze for announcing that bodies or treasures are buried where there is nothing of the sort." Many make no announcements, and appear to have no distinct notion of what they want, or why they are manifesting themselves. Many find a somewhat childish pleasure in moving furniture, or breaking the kitchen crockery. Many can do nothing but rap, and practice this solitary accomplishment with monotonous and purposeless fidelity. And many more, like the fabulous *esprit d'Orléans*, have an unpleasant flavor of charlatanism and quackery. Yet our hearts confess to a survival of the old, unreasoning fear, the primitive emotions which centuries do little to efface. Long, long ago, in Greece, the dogs howled dismally when Hecate stood by the cross-ways; and even now her presence

overshadows us, when we waken at night to hear the melancholy sounds. Long, long ago, the ghost of Caligula walked in the gardens of Lavinia; and superstition whispers to us even now that the troubled spirits which haunt the abodes of man are no friendly shades of departed mediocrity, but phantoms evil in every instinct, and linked with inexpiable crime.

DISCARDED

R

PS 5155
2696 Repplier
.E75 Essays in miniature.
1895

DATE DUE		

ST. ANDREWS PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE
DE TAMBLE LIBRARY
LAURINBURG, NORTH CAROLINA